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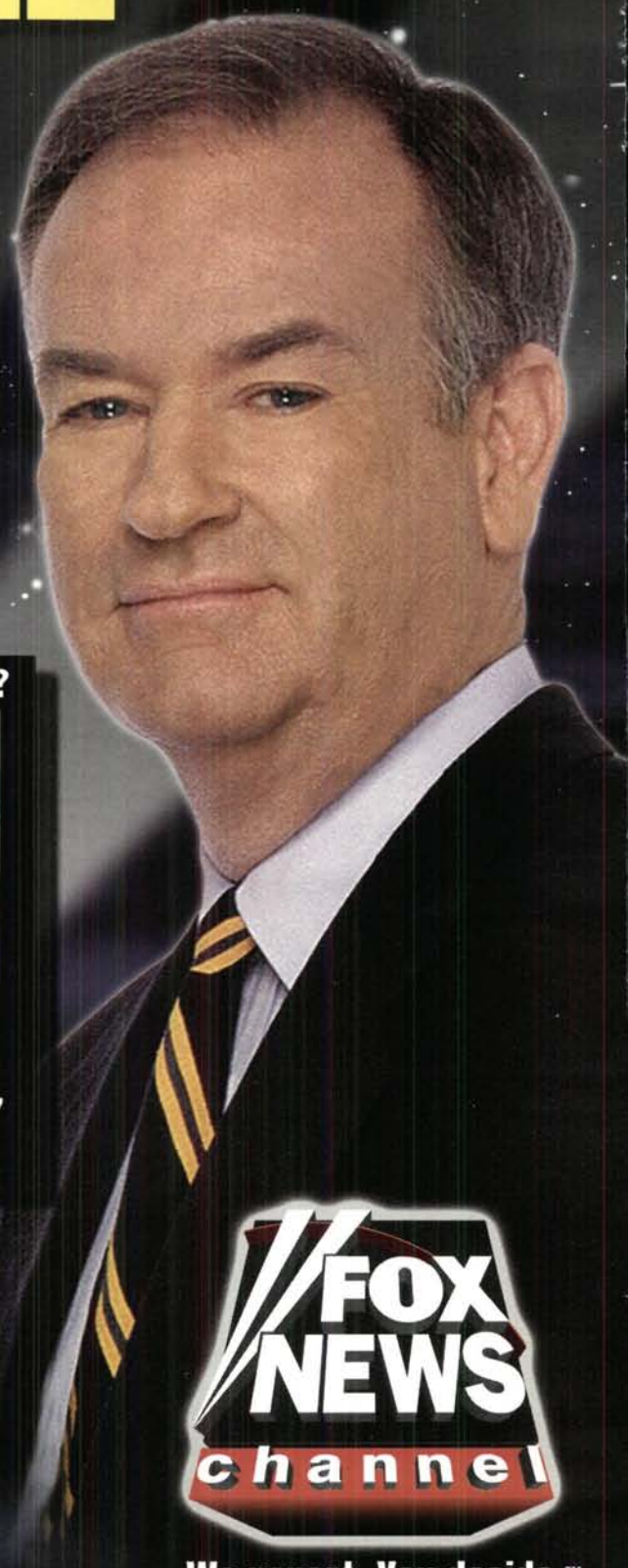

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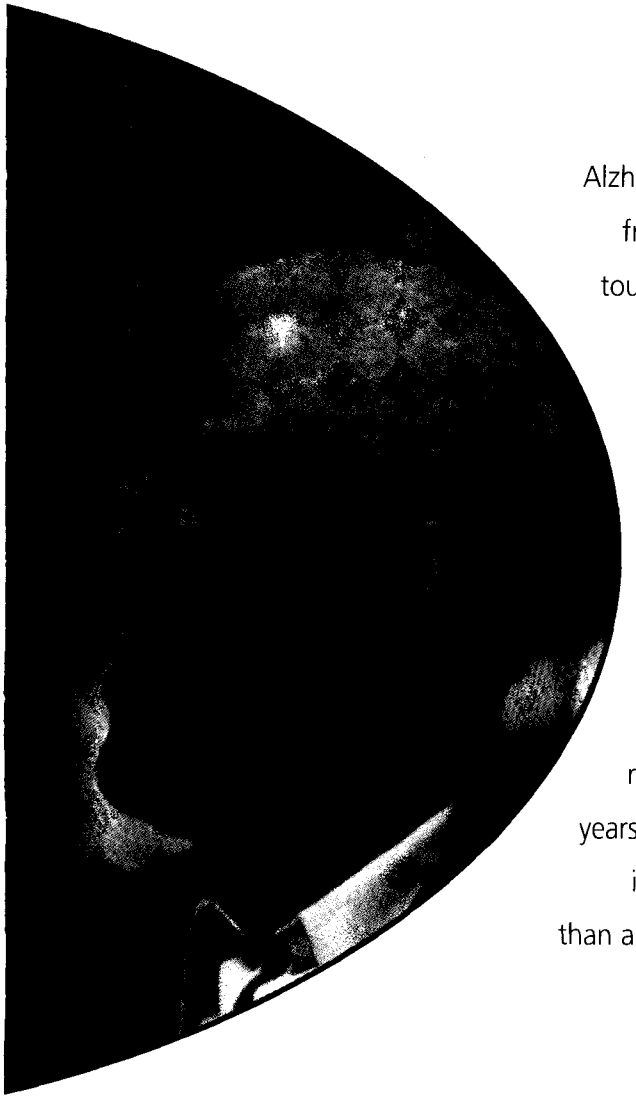

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■ LETTERS ■

DEMOCRACY IN VERMONT

Your September 20 editorial significantly mischaracterizes what is happening in Vermont. As Dick Cheney correctly described it, Vermont is involved in a process of making decisions about its internal affairs. There is no "legal game plan" to impose Vermont's decisions on other states. During the hearings on what became the civil-unions bill, I testified on the full-faith-and-credit implications of a statute enacted in Vermont. As the legislature fully understood, it is unlikely that other states would be compelled to recognize Vermont's civil unions. The decisions being made here are about Vermont and no other state.

Contrary to the impression you gave your readers, democracy is functioning quite well in Vermont. Neither the 25,000 who signed a petition opposing civil unions nor the small number who spoke up on Town Meeting Day constitute a majority of the voters in Vermont. Nor do we choose our representatives by petition, town meeting, or polls. That is done on Election Day. The people of Vermont will have every opportunity to express their views and decide whether to reelect the majority of legislators who voted for the civil-unions bill and who were not defeated during the primaries.

Vermont has done exactly what you recommend: granted gay and lesbian couples the rights everyone possesses. Without the civil-unions bill a gay or lesbian Vermonter did not have the right to visit his or her partner in the hospital, did not have family-landowner rights to hunt and fish, could not inherit by intestate succession, could not own property as tenants by the entirety, and did not have immunity from compelled testimony. Perhaps there is a reason to mobilize national resistance to one state's decision to grant these rights to all its citizens, but that reason does not come immediately to mind.

Stripped of its mischaracterizations, your call for the nation to defend the institution of marriage against an attack by Vermont is nothing more than a lame excuse for interfering with what right-thinking conservatives would regard as a matter for each state to decide. Fortunately, most Vermonters—on both sides of this issue—embrace the state's long tradition of ignoring officious meddlers who would tell us how to live.

Gil Kujovich
Vermont Law School
South Royalton, Vt.

'MARRIAGE' POLITICS

Thank you for publishing Stanley Kurtz's "Civil Revolt" (Oct. 9). In his otherwise excellent article describing the groundswell of Americans who still believe in marriage and the traditional family, Mr. Kurtz mistakenly indicated that the Netherlands has legalized gay "marriage." While this confusion is understandable in light of the inaccurate coverage the mainstream press has given to recent events in Holland, NATIONAL REVIEW readers should be aware that the Netherlands has not legalized same-sex "marriage."

On September 12, the lower house of the Dutch Parliament voted to adopt two bills, one of which would legalize same-sex "marriage" and another that would permit adoption by homosexual couples. However, contrary to most newspaper reports, the debate in Holland is only halfway through. Like the United States, the legislature of Holland is composed of two houses, each of which must approve legislation. Observers on both sides of the debate agree that when these bills reach the First Chamber of the Dutch Parliament, the vote will be much closer than it was in the Second Chamber, with the result anything but certain.

Just like it's not over in Vermont, it's not over in Holland, either.

Joshua Baker
Marriage Law Project
Washington, D.C.

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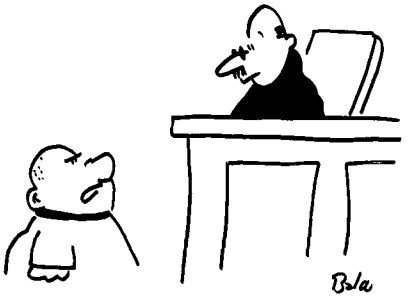
■ FOR THE RECORD ■

■ *The Hotline*'s electoral scoreboard of latest state polls shows Vice President **Gore** leading in 24 states worth 293 electoral votes, and **George W. Bush** ahead in 24 states worth 191 electoral votes (270 needed to win). . . . Senate polls currently suggest GOP may pick up a seat, but most analysts continue to say Democrats will gain one to three. . . . **Charlie Cook**, in *National Journal*: "The race for control of the House is too close to call. . . . It looks as if the Democrats will pick up seats, but whether they can get to the magic number of six is far from clear." . . . Republicans hold 30–18 gubernatorial lead over Democrats, with November pick-up hopes in Missouri, North Carolina, and possibly Vermont, and losses feared in Montana, North Dakota, and West Virginia.

■ Bush, campaigning in Florida, assesses impeachment role of Rep. **Bill McCollum** (also Senate candidate), in *Miami Herald*: "I saw him take a lot of heat. He held his head high and did what he felt was right, whether you agree or not—and I agree 100 percent." . . . **Larry King** asks Bush whether he thinks school vouchers would work, Bush replies: "I'm not positive." (Adds: "I think we ought to try them.") . . . **Karl Rove**, on whether Bush picking Pennsylvania governor **Tom Ridge** as running mate would have made it easier to win state, in *Philadelphia Inquirer*: "I'm ducking the question." . . . Fraternal Order of Police, which supported **Clinton**, endorses Bush. . . . As Baylor University president **Robert B. Sloan** makes plans for George W. Bush Presidential Library, campaign's **Mindy Tucker** tells Associated Press, "We're glad that people are excited about it, but we've got to get there first." . . . *Los Angeles Times* editorial: "There's nothing in [Gore's] record to indicate that he would stand up to education unions and take some of the bold steps that strongly encourage change. . . . Bush has a more real-world feel for education . . . he is largely his own man."

■ MTV's **Yago**, introducing Gore: "Having a lawmaker for a dad didn't keep Gore from succumbing to the countercultural influences of the 1960s. He listened to rock, rode a motorcycle, and even smoked the herb." . . . **Bill Bradley**, asked on Fox News Channel whether Gore is "trustworthy," dodges: "I think that there is no question that he would be a better president." . . . **Ralph Nader**, on Gore: "There is a forked tongue operating here." . . . Michigan governor **John Engler** on UAW workers having Election Day as paid holiday, in *Detroit News*: "the biggest corporate contribution in American political history." . . . In hearings, Rep. **Chris Shays** (R., Conn.) asks energy secretary **Bill Richardson** whether "Big Oil" is "responsible for the $35-plus a barrel." Richardson replies: "No. It is a variety of factors. It's the market. It's many other



"Okay, so I rob banks. Why can't you accept me for what I am?"

reasons." . . . **Jerry Springer** ponders 2002 run for office in Ohio as Democrat, tells AFL-CIO convention, "I've never left politics. It's like your religion." . . . Former Boston mayor **Ray Flynn** (D.), in *National Catholic Register*: "Don't vote for anyone who doesn't strongly have a pro-life position."

■ President Clinton says he won't write book about impeachment after leaving office: "I'm going to think about other things when I get out. I've thought about it enough already." . . . *New York Post* reports Clinton aide **Sidney Blumenthal** plans to write tell-all memoir to pay legal bills, but White House denies. . . . Clinton press secretary **Joe Lockhart** resigns. . . . Miami relatives of **Elián González** sue attorney general **Janet Reno** over pre-dawn raid to seize boy last April. . . . Government denies visa to Cuban mother hoping to attend funeral of son, who died in plane crash while fleeing Cuba, due to fear she wouldn't return. . . . In *USA Today* survey, almost two-thirds of economists predict Federal Reserve will lower interest rates in first half of 2001.

■ **Jim Lehrer**, host of *NewsHour* on PBS and moderator of presidential debates, in *Boston Globe*: "I haven't voted since 1964. . . . I don't want to get my judgment involved in what I do for a living." . . . After *New York Times* labels him a "non-voting Republican," **David Letterman** says "I'm not a Republican" three times on show and also says he votes. . . . Sen. **Daniel Patrick Moynihan** (D., N.Y.), D.C. mayor **Anthony Williams** (D.), and D.C. Del. **Eleanor Holmes Norton** (D.) call for reopening Pennsylvania Ave. to traffic in front of White House; Clinton closed it following Oklahoma City bombing. . . . Gen. **Eric Shinseki**, Army chief of staff: "Our soldiers believe that the Army is too small for the missions it is asked to perform." . . . NR editor-at-large **John O'Sullivan** and Media Research Center's **Brent Bozell** to speak about election at ChristiFideles luncheon in New York City on Oct. 29. For information call (212) 682-1336.

■ Secretary of State **Madeleine Albright** says she will visit North Korea before leaving office "if circumstances allow." . . . OPEC says countries concerned about soaring oil prices should cut their own gas taxes. . . . Following public outrage over Italian state TV airing graphic images of child pornography in news report, anchorman and top executives resign. . . . Vatican condemns Italian government for approving use of abortion pill RU-486.

■ Minnesota governor **Jesse Ventura**, on attending an MLK Day event with African-American scholar **Henry Louis Gates Jr.**: "He looked down at me—I was sitting in front—you know what he said to me? He said, 'You're going to find out what it's like to be black.' . . . And I have." **NR**

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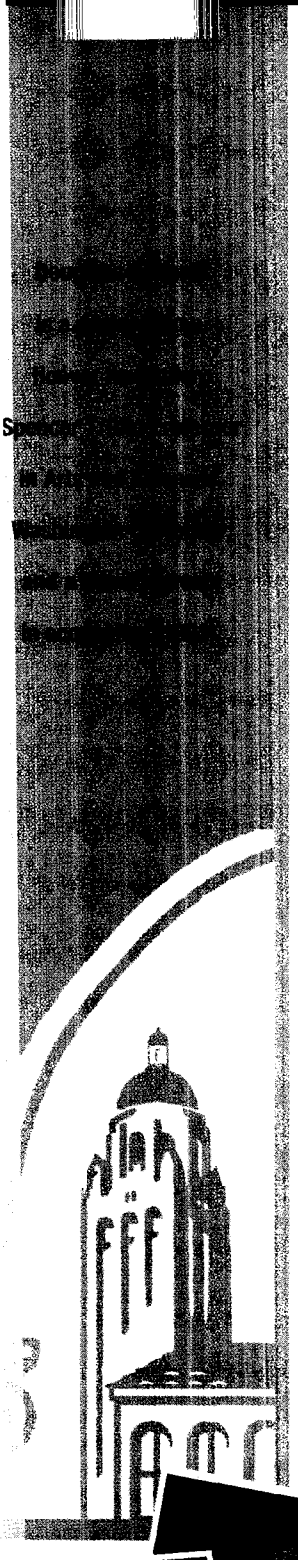
Poverty in the Midst of Plenty



We live in a world where some countries enjoy a material abundance beyond the wildest dreams of our forefathers. Such countries are rich because they are productive. The sources of that productivity—growing markets, technological improvement, and investment in human beings (human capital)—all play an important part in increasing productivity. The new growth economics literature has formalized some of these findings, but economic historians, development economists, and specialists in growth accounting have broadly understood them for some time.

By any standard of measurement much of the world's population is still poor, with individuals subsisting on less than two dollars a day. The disparity between the well-being of the average person in the developed world, where per capita annual income may exceed $20,000, and that in low-income countries such as Haiti or most of sub-Saharan Africa, where it may be under $500 a year, is striking, especially when one sees up close the living conditions associated with such poverty.

How do we account for the persistence of poverty in the midst of plenty? If we know the sources of plenty, why don't poor countries simply adopt policies that make for plenty? The answer is straightforward. We just don't know how to get there. **We must create incentives for people to invest in more efficient technology, increase their skills, and organize efficient markets.** Such incentives are embodied in institutions. Thus we must understand the nature of institutions and how they evolve.

Institutions are the framework that humans create to structure human interaction. They are made up of formal rules (constitutions, laws, and regulations) and informal constraints (conventions and norms of behavior) and the way both are enforced. Well-specified property rights that reward productive and creative activity, a legal system that enforces such laws at low cost, and internal codes of conduct that are complementary to such formal rules are the essential underpinning to productive economies. But well-specified property rights and an effective legal system are the creation of the political structure. Unfortunately, we do not know how to put such a political structure in place. Informal norms of behavior that make for honesty, integrity, and hard work are the product of long-term human interaction; we do not know how to create them in the short run. The result has been that **efforts to improve the performance of poor countries have been something less than a rousing success.** Sub-Saharan Africa remains a basket case, and our efforts to transform the diverse parts of the former Soviet Union into productive economies have so far been a dismal failure. But we are getting a better understanding of the process of political-economic change. The sources of informal constraints such as norms of behavior are a major modern priority in the social sciences and down the road will result in accelerating the reduction of poverty.

— Douglass C. North

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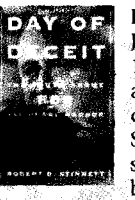

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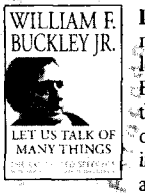

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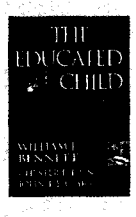

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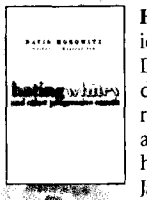

Hating Whitey - With his trademark iconoclastic style, reformed radical David Horowitz dissects the social double standard that dismisses black racism. The so-called civil rights leaders are outraged by, among other things, his reference to Kweisi Mfume and Jesse Jackson as "racial ambulance chasers."
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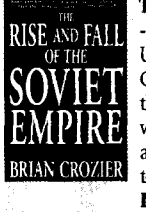

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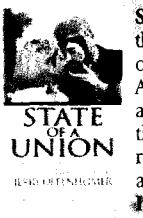

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THE WEEK

■ Al Gore was at his obnoxious best in the first presidential debate. While George W. Bush spoke, Gore grimaced, sighed dramatically, chuckled mirthlessly. Gore interrupted and browbeat Bush. He kept . . . ex-AG-ger-a-ting his . . . in-TO-nations in that weird way of his. And he won the debate. He took command early, trampling all over Jim Lehrer and the debate format the campaigns had negotiated so carefully, and as a result had the last word on almost every subject. He got across all his points, put Bush on the spot, even got part of the audience at one point to laugh at him. Bush did well only in comparison to the late-night-TV caricature of himself. He showed that he wasn't in completely over his head. On a few issues—education, Social Security, Gore's profligacy—his answers were pretty impressive. (You could tell because they provoked Gore's deepest sighs.) But his jokes fell flat. He fumbled the question about what he would do in a financial crisis. On abortion, he made two mistakes: He let Gore get away with the disingenuous claim that he would ban partial-birth abortion as long as there was an exception for the health of the mother, and his position on RU-486 was confusing. The silver lining for Republicans is that the debate probably won't matter much. Nobody doubted that Gore knew his stuff, and he didn't give undecided voters good reasons to vote for him. Bush avoided disaster; he can't have gained voters, but he probably didn't lose many either.

■ Perhaps Bush was weakest in deflecting Gore's charge that his tax cut is unreasonably skewed to the top 1 percent of earners. But the relief the wealthy get under the Bush plan is a product of the steeply progressive nature of the tax code. The top 1 percent of earners pay about a third of income taxes—and this category doesn't include just millionaires, as Gore seemed to suggest at one point, but reaches down to people making roughly $250,000 a year. The top 10 percent of earners—a category that includes people making $80,000—pay about 60 percent of all income taxes. In contrast, the bottom 50 percent of earners pay just 4 percent. This is why any income tax cut is a "tax cut for the rich." In any case, experience shows that the way to get "the rich" to cough up more revenues is to cut their tax rates. Before the Reagan tax cuts, the top 1 percent of earners paid about 18 percent of income taxes. After the cuts, the number jumped to about 28 percent (by 1988). This is because the lower rates encouraged productivity and growth, expanding the economic pie for everyone and creating more tax revenues in the process. In fact, Gore's dreaded wealthy are the ones who have provided the seed money for the high-tech startups that have driven the nation's economic growth. Leaving more capital in their hands—where it can be saved and invested, and fund the next great leaps of American prosperity—isn't a weakness of Bush's plan, but one of its great strengths.

■ It was appropriate that almost the first words out of Gore's mouth at the debate were a misrepresentation. "I have actually not questioned Governor Bush's experience," Gore assured Lehrer. But, in an interview printed by the *New York Times* on March 12, Gore said: "You have to wonder whether [Bush] has the experience to be president. I mean, you really have to wonder. . . . You have to wonder: Does Governor Bush have the experience to be president? . . . Again you have to wonder: Does George Bush have the experience to be president?"

■ Of course, Gore denies that he has the tendency to indulge in falsehoods. He complained to Larry King about the perception that he believes facts are stupid things: "Oh, I think that itself is an exaggeration." But is it? NR has documented Gore's problems with the truth ("Through His Teeth," May 22, 2000), and has maintained a running list of his fibs on National Review Online. There have been 25 since October of last year, including three told during one week in September: Gore claimed that his mother pays more for the same arthritis medicine he gives his dog (the story is false—Gore lifted it from a study done by House Democrats); he said, "I've been a part of the discussions on the strategic [oil] reserve since the days when it was first established" (even though it was established before he joined Congress); and he bragged that, as a baby, a certain union song was his lullaby (though it was written when he was 27). Taken alone, any of these remarks is probably excusable—it's possible to say something incorrect without intending to deceive. That's basically how Gore defended himself to King: "If you get a fact wrong [in a campaign], all of a sudden you're accused of, you know, committing some horrible offense." But with Gore, the frequency of the mistakes is unsettling. Either the vice president has a serious problem keeping his facts straight, or he's an incessant liar.

■ The line between "civil union" and gay marriage has always been an exceedingly fine one, and it is getting finer. The problem is that a civil union is supposed to be legally equivalent to marriage, yet somehow distinct from it. The distinction is designed to be without a difference. So it is not surprising that Al Gore should announce his support for treating civil unions just like marriages when it comes to immigration law and Social Security benefits. Now to do this, the federal government would need to have a definition of a valid civil union. And this definition would become a legal basis on which to demand recognition of civil unions—and

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Just like its companions in the Bill of Rights — freedoms of speech and religion and the press — the right to bear arms welcomes all who believe in its core principles of freedom. *It also welcomes differing views about how it's exercised.* Our mutual commitment must be to defend the freedom, not to defame its critics.

I hope you'll help the NRA restore gun ownership and the shooting sports to their rightful, respected place in mainstream American life. *And if you won't, please let me know why.* **I'm The NRA.**

Charlton Heston
Actor

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Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President

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eventually gay marriages—by all 50 states. If that's Gore's destination, he ought to say so.

■ The *New York Times* made a strained and defensive apology for its Wen Ho Lee coverage. More evidence of the Gray Lady's exaggerated self-regard? Perhaps. But maybe the problem was that the *Times* didn't have much to apologize for. The tone of the original *Times* story was—as one would expect, given that its topic was the possible theft of the nation's most precious secrets—a tad hot. But as the months went on, the *Times* followed up its reporting with stories more skeptical of the government's case. Its performance necessitates no paroxysms of "self-examination." But a pro-Lee backlash is in full swing and the *Times* can't get on the wrong side of any charges of "racial profiling." Meanwhile, the scientist who supposedly testified that 99 percent of the information downloaded by Lee was unclassified—a contention repeated over and over in the media—has now made it clear he meant only the underlying software and math, not the actual, highly sensitive nuclear data. As FBI director Louis Freeh demonstrated in his congressional testimony, the pattern of Lee's conduct as early as 1982 is inconsistent with his current martyr status, which will probably have to be reevaluated soon enough. If you thought the *Times* apology was grudging, just wait for the apology for the apology.

■ Rick Lazio scored his first triumph in the New York Senate race. Unfortunately, it was getting Hillary Clinton to agree to a "soft money ban," an unworthy cause that has the added disadvantage of paying no political dividends. Clinton maintained her lead after the highly touted deal. The only effect will be perhaps to create a Silent Fall in New York, as interest groups are discouraged from spending the dreaded, unregulated "soft money" on TV ads (fortunately, NARAL, the pro-abortion group, says it will run ads anyway, and other groups will surely follow). Never one to miss an opportunity for trendy posturing, Al Gore immediately offered George W. Bush a similar deal, and was met with hoots of derision. Which is what all such attempts to crimp and quiet our politics deserve.

■ Congressional Republicans have traded in their budget axe for Carry Nation's hatchet. In the closing days of this session, they are stuffing spending bills with pork—and ordering states to tighten their standards for drunk driving. A provision in the transportation appropriations bill declares that the 30 states that have set the standard at a blood-alcohol level of 0.10 will lose federal highway funds if they fail to conform with Washington's new temperance standard of 0.08. It would make more sense to enforce current law: Eighty percent of drunk-driving fatalities result from recidivism. But the surest way to undercut public support for strict enforcement is to criminalize social drinking and driving. A woman who enjoys two glasses of wine over a two-hour period would risk flunking the 0.08 standard. The national mandate is the handiwork of Republican congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia (a state which has already adopted the 0.08 standard and seen its fatalities increase). But it is also the fault of Speaker Denny Hastert, who capitulated to Wolf. Warning: If you are tempted to ponder over a drink why a Republican Congress matters, stay off the roads.

■ The Supreme Court's decision in *Rice* earlier this year banned Hawaii's practice of allowing only "Native Hawaiians" (i.e., people of aboriginal ancestry) to vote in elections determining the trustees of the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which controls some $300 million in assets and 200,000 acres of land. But now the House has voted to circumvent the ruling. Republicans in Congress have not done much to promote colorblindness in the law, but must they undo progress being made elsewhere?

■ In a few short years, the word "diversity" has changed its meaning and become something akin to a state religion in America. So Richard Nadler, a frequent contributor to NR, found out when his group, the Republican Ideas Political Committee, ran an ad in Kansas City on school choice. The narrator of the ad, a white woman, says that while her daughter had done well in the local public high school, her son had "started hanging with the wrong crowd." She continues, "We didn't want him where drugs and violence were fashionable. That was a bit more diversity than he could handle. So we sent him to a private school run by our church. There, he gets more attention, and the moral expectations are higher." She concludes by noting that Republican policies would help her family. In context, "diversity" refers to unhealthy subcultures in the school, while also lightly mocking liberals' reverential use of the word. All of the kids depicted as troublemakers in the ad are white. Nobody in Kansas City took offense. But then the national media, led by the *Washington Post*, started to run misleading articles about the ad. And suddenly it was being condemned by *bien-pensants* both nationally and locally: by Democratic spokesmen (who called it "Willie Horton-esque," "race-baiting," and "repugnant to all Americans"), by the Bush campaign ("wrong-headed"), the Republican candidate for governor of Missouri ("demeaning message and undertones"), and the RNC ("racist or race-baiting in intent"). A member of the Kansas City school board suggested that sentiments similar to those expressed in the ad had led to—yes—the Holocaust. The episode, so depressingly familiar in outline, at least gives us a working definition of "diversity": We all get to be liberals.

■ Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt has announced his intention to give Kennewick Man—one of the most ancient and important sets of human remains ever found in the United States—to a group of Indian tribes. Babbitt says the tribes have a right to the 9,300-year-old bones because their "oral histories" say they've occupied the Columbia River region "for millennia." Never mind that they surely didn't exist 93 centuries ago in any cultural form recognizable today, or that the near-complete skeleton—to which some respect-

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ed scientists have ascribed "Caucasoid" features—may tell an unknown story about the prehistoric settlement of the Americas ("Remains of the Day," March 8, 1999). The tribes want to block any further study of Kennewick Man and bury the bones, which the government seized from a lab four years ago, and Babbitt believes he has the authority to help them. That's debatable, and a pending court case may yet decide their fate. But it's distressing that our understanding of the human past can so easily become a casualty of race-based political patronage.

■ It is quite a memorial to be the last Communist boss in Europe, but Slobodan Milosevic is having trouble with his curtain call. The retirement homes on offer are in Moscow, Beijing, or Baghdad, hardly as amusing or rewarding as the Belgrade he's plundered and made his own for so long. What would he have to say to his good friends Vladimir Putin or Saddam Hussein as the evenings drag on? Better to resort to the tried and tested tactics of stealing elections, rigging public opinion, and murdering an opponent or two. But loyal henchmen are deserting, journalists are no longer so tame, the streets are thronged with demonstrators, and Vojislav Kostunica has every right to form a new government. The army and the special police forces have the alternatives of turning their guns on the crowds, or on the Milosevic family. "Exeunt, bearing off the bodies" is how Shakespeare liked to write final stage directions.

■ Ariel Sharon and Yasser Arafat are old hands at whipping up violence that serves themselves and their ambitions. Both want to exploit what everyone knows all too well, that there is not the slightest possibility of compromise on the issue of Jerusalem. The same site is sacred to Muslims and to Jews, and the worship of one party interferes physically as well as spiritually with the worship of the other. Nobody has any realistic plan for ending the bloodshed that's been going on there for a couple of thousand years. There is no peace in this dispute, and no process either. Sharon imagines himself as the next Israeli prime minister; Arafat imagines himself as the heroic founder of a Palestinian state. And Mohammed al-Durra of Gaza, the 12-year-old pitifully caught and killed in the crossfire, imagined that he was going out that day to search with his father for a secondhand car to buy. It may look as if he and the others killed in this latest bout of communal fighting are victims of religious bigotry, but more to the point they are helpless counters in political games played for the very highest stakes.

■ "A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity," a document released by more than 160 rabbis and scholars, addresses a number of theological points: "Jews and Christians . . . seek authority from the same book—the Bible" and "worship the same God." Such issues are deeply complex, and the authors are well aware of the limitations that hedge their assertions. Even leaving aside the New Testament, Jews and Christians arrange the books of their Bibles differently; a God who is a Trinity is not precisely the same as One who is not. But the statement also addresses one historical point which is more foursquare: "Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon," nor was Nazism "an inevitable outcome of Christianity." The Nazis manipulated the legacies of centuries of Christian Jew-baiting, but they themselves were 19th-century racialist romantics: perverse heirs of Darwin and Wagner, rather than St. Paul. Christian churches have stressed that point to their own believers, during and after World War II; the Jewish theologians were right to recognize it.

Little White Lies

Al's whoppers aren't as slick as Bill's,
Nor is he subtle as the shills
Brought to a peak in Fagin's band.
Initially, Al got a hand
When he recalled how Mother Gore
Sang union songs to coax a snore
From sweetums swaddled in his crib,
But that turned out to be a fib.

—W. H. von Dreele

■ Book and newspaper publishing houses back in the old Soviet Union used to employ teams of experts to doctor photographs, so that ne'er-do-wells like Trotsky, who had turned out to be pushing the wheel of history in the wrong direction, could be permanently removed from the national memory. Now there may be some job opportunities opening up in this line of work on America's campuses, though the technique required here is not to get undesirables *out* of photographs, but to get desirables *in*. The University of Wisconsin at Madison produced an admissions pack with a cover photograph showing spectators at one of the university's football games. Unfortunately all of the spectators were white, which of course would not do. The admissions office therefore spliced in a picture of a black senior from a quite different photograph. "I think they stepped over the line, and this is not the way we ought to do this," opined one of the university's vice chancellors. Something about straining at gnats while swallowing camels comes to mind here. Having doctored their admissions processes in the name of "diversity," and their course content in the name of "multiculturalism," why should not college officials assume they have a license to doctor mere photographs?

■ The Casey Martin litigation now heads for the Supreme Court. Martin, a professional golfer, has a circulatory problem in his right leg that makes it painful for him to walk the course. The PGA Tour said that he could not compete using a golf cart, and in 1997 he sued under a provision of the Americans

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with Disabilities Act. Lower courts have disagreed over whether his use of a cart would "fundamentally alter" the nature of the competition. Many professional golfers, including Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus, say it would, that fitness and endurance count as the match proceeds. Given the free-form nature of Supreme Court jurisprudence, it's anyone's guess how it will rule. But this is not "discrimination," it's what athletics is about—you compete with the body you brought.

■ Dr. Richard Zeller, professor of sociology at Ohio's Bowling Green State University, had a neat idea: to teach a course on the phenomenon of "political correctness." Prof. Zeller's colleagues, however, said "no" to the course, and when he pressed his case they voted him down 9–5. He took his proposal to other departments, but none would approve it. Weary of the battle at last, Prof. Zeller retired from the school in protest, after 25 years of teaching. But this grubby—and, alas, all too typical—little episode at least did not pass without producing one small verbal gem. Turning down Prof. Zeller's course on behalf of her own department, Dr. Kathleen Dixon, BGSU's Director of Women's Studies, delivered herself of the following declaration: "We forbid any course that says we restrict free speech."

■ Pierre Trudeau, who died at age 80, was a force of nature, driving the chickens of Canada before him like a fox. Unfortunately he did almost nothing positive. In 1970, when Quebec separatists went on a violent crime spree, Trudeau stamped them out, as briskly as Lincoln suppressing the Draft Riots. That ends the list of his good points. The son of a rich Montreal businessman, Trudeau's hard-left youth gave way to a career in the Liberal party. His tenure as prime minister, which lasted (except for one brief interruption) from 1968 to 1984, was consumed with the problem of Canadian nationalism: After the British Empire died, what could hold Canadians together? His answers were social spending, rigid bilingualism, and spiteful taunting of America. He gave early recognition to Communist China, forced farmers in Alberta to speak like Inspector Clouseau, and saddled Canada with high debts and a weak economy. His personal life, which once seemed so debonair, has worn as well as an old Beatles poster. At age 51 he married a crazy, rich 21-year-old he had met at Club Med. Her cuckoldries would have disgraced him if he had been vulnerable to shame. At age 71 he fathered an illegitimate child on a young lawyer. Who says Canadians are dull?

ABORTION

Miscarriage of Justice

THE FDA approved the sale of "the abortion pill"—actually, two different pills that induce a miscarriage. Advocates of abortion believe they have scored a great victory. They think that by taking abortion out of the clinics and into pregnant women's homes, they have reduced its stigma. More doctors will be willing to provide the pills than perform surgical abortions. The pills would be taken early in pregnancy, too, when Americans have fewer qualms about abortion.

But it is best not to rush to judgment about the impact of the FDA's decision. It's not clear that it will increase the total number of abortions. The abortion pills' popularity may also be limited by the number of doctor visits they require and the unpleasantness of the procedure. The pills are supposed to empower women. They will be able to have their abortions without interference from the state, the community, their parents, their husbands or boyfriends—and now, without a doctor present. All by themselves. All alone.

They may tell themselves that it is no great wrong to dispose of what is, after all, only a clump of cells. A curious phrase, that: All of us are clumps of cells. And while this clump is tiny, it is no tinier than all of us once were. Morally, size doesn't matter. At any stage of pregnancy and by whatever method, abortion is the intentional taking of a human life.

The point was put in stark relief by a recent vote in the House. The abortion lobby was able to get only 15 congressmen to vote with it against the proposition that a baby who survives an abortion should, once outside his mother's womb, enjoy legal protection. NARAL, the leading abortion-rights group, took the pro-infanticide position because it could not abide the granting of "legal personhood to a pre-viable fetus"—even one outside the womb. As NARAL reminds us, the abortion debate isn't really about "terminating pregnancies," and never has been. It's about terminating human beings.

PUBLIC POLICY

Oil Slick

PRICES have jumped at the gas pump, so the Clinton administration announced a gradual release of 30 million barrels of oil from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, to run through November. November, November—is anything else scheduled for that month, besides Thanksgiving?

As an election ploy, the oil release is pure Clinton/Gore. It is of dubious legality—the relevant law, which expired in March, authorized drawdowns only in the event of "severe energy supply disruption" (e.g., an embargo, or World War III). The drawdown is almost entirely symbolic, since it accounts for only one-twentieth of the entire reserve, and a day and a half of American oil use. Even if Al Gore believes his preacher rhetoric about Big Oil, it is counterproductive: In exchange for oil released now, oil companies are expected to give oil back to the reserve later, when prices will, presumably, have dropped. In other words, they will be selling what Washington gives them high and buying the replacement oil low—a neat trick.

George W. Bush, for his part, proposed to bring prices down by allowing drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

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This tract of northeastern Alaska, set aside by Jimmy Carter, is prime oil territory—Alaska's North Slope and the start of its pipeline lie just to the west—but drilling is forbidden, to protect a caribou herd. Yet caribou on the North Slope have flourished (they have been observed warming themselves against the pipeline in winter), while the "footprint," or area, of modern drilling facilities is one-third of what it was in the 1970s, when the North Slope was developed. Drilling in the Wildlife Refuge offers great benefits at minimal cost.

Bush suggested Alaskan drilling in a package of proposals, of mixed value. Most useful was his suggestion that we encourage higher production from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the Emirates. Since the defense of these countries is contracted out to the Pentagon—a fact President Bush's son and Dick Cheney know better than anyone—there is room for progress here. Less usefully, Bush threw in a few billion for coal, alternative energy, and home-heating subsidies.

Bush's program is a lot better than Al Gore's, which is a compound of sly showboating, demonizing oil, and shrinking the American economy in the interests of conservation. If George W. Bush can make the point that Al Gore is an old-style mouther and an enemy of the automobile, he will be doing himself good—and telling the truth.

EUROPE

The Danes Say No

EUROPE, so the argument runs in European capitals, must match the United States. This means a single currency, the euro already in place, then harmonization of policies, finally federation. Here is the latest of the visionary ideas of the 20th century, and the Eurocrats in charge like to claim that it is historically inevitable. Their forebears used to talk that way about Marxism. Under the guise of this inevitability, every single European country already in the euro zone has imposed the new currency without reference to the wishes of its electorate.

Not so fast. Events in Denmark—a country of 5 million, but with a strong national identity—prove once again that people don't like being told that their job is to obey a government that knows what is best for them. Back in the spring, the prime minister, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, a socialist and Eurocrat, decided to hold a referendum on whether to scrap the national currency in favor of the euro. He thought he had it sewn up. The establishment and the media were unanimous for a Yes vote, and they had the funds for it. They tried scaremongering: Denmark could not continue on its own, employment would collapse, and interest rates soar. Disorganized, and without financing, the Noes maintained that it was preferable to remain poor but independent than rich under the control of unaccountable Eurocrats. The referendum failed by 53.1 to 46.9 percent. On television, Rasmussen wiped away his tears.

Voters throughout Europe increasingly resent the way that they have been frogmarched into the euro. The heaviest burden falls on Germany. Germans are mortified that their Deutschemark has lost at least a quarter of its value. Worse is to come. The economies of Greece and the countries of Eastern Europe will soon have to be carried by the euro. According to polls, two-thirds of Germans now wish to escape from the common currency altogether.

Tony Blair has also committed himself to a referendum on whether Britain should substitute the euro for the pound. Again according to polls, two-thirds or more of British voters say No. A repeat of the Danish vote has the potential to destroy Blair and his government. But even in those countries benefiting from the euro economy, the realization is growing that their fairy gold comes at the price of losing control, first of national affairs, and then of national identity.

The discrepancy between the blueprints of leaders and the hopes and fears of ordinary people is already dangerous. Those who feel ruled without their consent take to the streets. The countries of the euro-zone are due to lock irrevocably into the common currency on January 1, 2002. They could postpone the date or abandon it forever, but visionary ideas have never so far given way to common sense.

THE OLYMPICS

Medals and Manners

FROM the start, a dark, greasy-looking cloud hung over the Sydney Olympic Games. We had the bribery scandals connected with the choice of Salt Lake City for future games, and now the doping scandals involving expulsions and disqualifications. And, day by day, we saw the atrocious behavior of many—especially American—athletes. There were exhibitionistic displays by the victorious relay team, a swimmer spat in the pool, the basketball team was loutish and brutal. The boos and catcalls were deserved. *Chariots of Fire* was a long time ago.

Which leads to a reflection on the idea of sportsmanship. The essence is that the game itself is more important than you are, a fact reflected in your manners. Tennis players shake hands after a match and offer congratulations. The legendary Princeton football (and hockey) player Hobey Baker was known to shed angry tears after being fouled, not because he was hurt but because the game had been injured. He is in both the collegiate football and hockey halls of fame.

The ideal of the subordinated ego is not altogether dead. In recent years Pete Sampras, never an engaging personality, has gained a quiet dignity. He sees himself as part of the history of tennis, one with Tilden, Budge, Kramer, Gonzales. He is too proud for any show of bad manners. He almost wept when losing to Safin in the U.S. Open, but smiled and congratulated the Russian. Ultimately, sportsmanship is connected with the idea of the gentleman, and, behind that, to chivalry—a word that obviously means nothing to the boorish American athletes in Sydney.

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■ ATTENTION ALL STATIONS: THIS IS NOT A PRACTICE ALERT. THIS IS A REAL ALERT!

To: All former members of Buckpac, Inc.

—The headline in the *Stamford Advocate*, Wednesday, August 30, 2000, read:

"WEICKER SAYS SENATE BID 'STANDS AS AN OPTION'"

"The Greenwich resident and former Connecticut governor told a Hartford-area radio station Monday afternoon that he would consider a run for U.S. Senate should a special election be held in 2001 or 2002."

Buckpac HQ will forward all relevant bulletins.

Meanwhile, no professional engagements should be made for September through November 2001 or 2002, in case there is a need for combat duty.

I enclose, for your benefit, the charter document of Buckpac, Inc.

Transcript of a press conference at Sharon, Conn., Monday, August 15, 1988:

Q. What is the purpose of "Buckleys for Lieberman"?

A. To generate support for the defeat of Lowell Weicker.

Q. So that it is primarily the retirement of Weicker, rather than the election of Lieberman, that you wish?

A. You can't have the one without the other. As for Joe Lieberman, he is a moderate Democrat, and it is always possible that he will progress in the right direction. There is no such hope for Lowell Weicker.

Q. Why do you call your organization "Buckleys for Lieberman"?

A. Within my own family there are a good many Buckleys, grounded in Connecticut. An informal estimate suggests that there are in the neighborhood of 11,000 Buckleys in the state. "Buckleys for Lieberman" intends to devote its primary attention to mobilizing their support for Lieberman.

Q. What do you propose to do about Buckleys who advise you they are for Weicker, not for Lieberman?

A. That matter will be referred to the Committee on Genealogy. It is entirely possible that there are, in Connecticut, persons who call themselves "Buckley" whose birth certificates would not bear out any such presumption.

Q. You mean to say you would challenge the legitimacy of a Buckley who announced his intention of voting for Weicker?

A. This is a very serious business. The future of self-government depends on retiring such as Weicker from the Senate. Correction, there is no such thing as "such as Weicker." He is unique.

Q. How do you propose to establish that?

A. That is the responsibility of the Horse's Ass Committee.

Q. The *what*?

A. The Horse's Ass Committee.

Q. What are *its* purposes?

A. To document that Lowell Weicker is the Number One Horse's Ass in the Senate. The committee, which is engaged in research, is absolutely confident that it will win any challenge, from anywhere, nominating any other member of Congress: Lowell Weicker will emerge as the winner.

Q. Just how do you define a horse's ass?

A. The kind of person who says dumb things dully, you know . . .

Q. Well, what kind of research is the committee engaged in?

A. Researching the speeches and public utterances of Lowell Weicker over the past 18 years. We have a few specimens ready for release at this time, but many, many more will be made public by the Degasification Committee.

Q. Excuse me?

A. Oh, yes. Well, the Degasification Committee is engaged in attempting to clean up the quality of public thought, and intends to demonstrate that the bombast, murk, and pomposity of Lowell Weicker's public declarations are a threat to democratic ecology. Hence the need for a Degasification Committee.

Q. Does "Buckleys for Lieberman" intend to do any active work beyond research?

A. Oh my, yes. We have already formed a political-action committee. The BuckPac. Contributions will be solicited from all Buckleys, state to state.

Q. Are you limiting financial contributions to people called Buckley?

A. No. Special membership goes to all Buckleys, whether Buckley is the surname, the maiden name, or the Christian name. There have already been inquiries from out-of-state Buckleys. Some of these will send money to BuckPac. Others plan to immigrate to Connecticut, become residents, and vote for Lieberman.

Q. Well, what happens when you run out of Buckleys?

A. Our Ethnographic Committee is compiling the names of Connecticut residents that appear most frequently in the telephone directories. We propose to encourage the formation of coordinate committees. You will not be surprised to know that "Smith," "Jones," "Gomez," "Guttman," and "Rosselli" are among the top 40 in frequency that appear in Connecticut phone books. We do not propose to neglect any citizen of Connecticut, even those with unusual or unique names. Our strategic objective is a committee representing every surname in any Connecticut phone book, taking the civic lead from "Buckleys for Lieberman," to help in the campaign to liberate Connecticut, and Congress, from Lowell Weicker.

Q. Does the committee have an address?

A. Indeed. It is P.O. Box 1464, Sharon, Connecticut, 06069.

Q. And officers?

A. Of course. William F. Buckley Jr. is President. Christopher T. Buckley is Vice President. Priscilla L. Buckley is Secretary-Treasurer. James W. Buckley is chairman of the Horse's Ass Committee. Mrs. Jane Buckley Smith is head of the Genealogy Committee. James Buckley Heath is head of the Ethnographic Committee. Bruce Buckley Smith is head of the Degasification Committee. Other appointments will be announced in due course. Regular press releases will be issued.

Good day.

—WFB

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 ■

The Serious Candidate

Surprise—it's W.

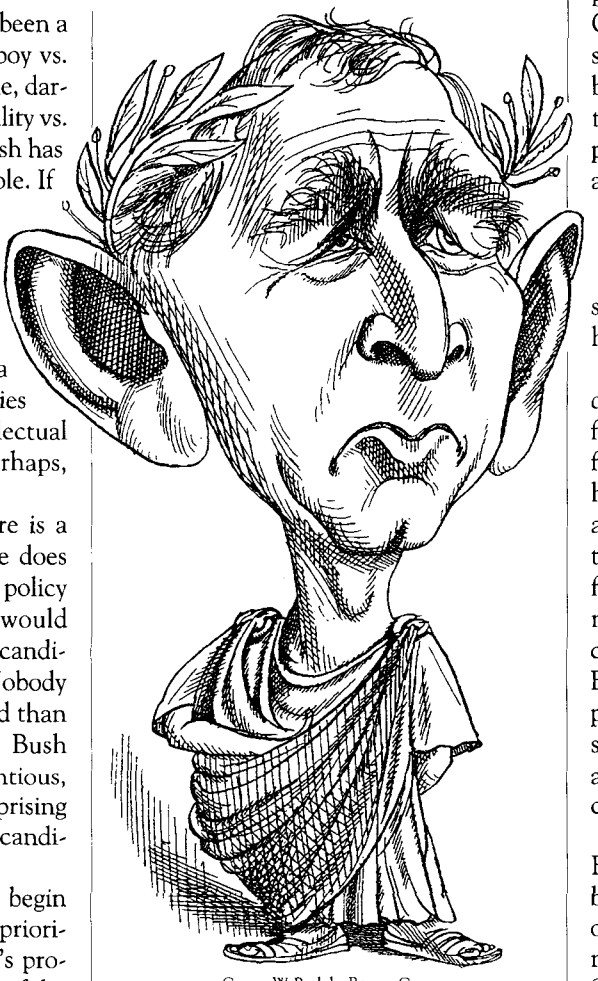
RAMESH PONNURU

THE presidential campaign has been a clash of caricatures: the frat boy vs. the grind, insouciance vs. discipline, daring vs. safety, the appeal of personality vs. the appeal of issues. George W. Bush has been cast in the happy-go-lucky role. If Al Gore actually reads his 500-page briefing books, Bush makes do with an executive summary of the executive summary. Martin Peretz assures us (and assures us, and assures us . . .) that Gore is a bona fide intellectual. Peretz worries only that Gore may be too intellectual for Americans (who do not, perhaps, deserve him?).

As with most caricatures, there is a truth that these exaggerate. Gore does know the ins and outs of national policy better than Bush does, as one would expect given how much of each candidate's life has been spent on it. Nobody doubts that Gore is more well-read than Bush. But don't be fooled: It's Bush who's running the more conscientious, public-spirited campaign. The surprising truth is that Bush is the serious candidate in this race.

Bush has been more serious, to begin with, about identifying national priorities. One can disagree with Bush's proposals to address the inadequacies of the schools and of the armed forces; one can even disagree about the extent of those inadequacies. But the importance of the schools and the military to the country's future is not in doubt; if they're in trouble, so are we. Who, by contrast, thinks that there's a pressing national need for more subsidies for the elderly? Gore plans to spend $338 billion over the next ten years expanding Medicare to cover prescription drugs, plus $100 billion more increasing Social Security benefits. (These are Gore's cost estimates.) This is pure pandering.

Gore has largely gotten a free ride in the press about his spending plans. As a result, he's been able to pose as the candidate of "fiscal responsibility" while arguing that Bush's tax cuts would bring back deficits. Whether deficits are so awful is a debatable question, as is whether it's worthwhile to try to predict what the budget will look like ten years from now. But since Bush and Gore both accept these premises, the salient question is whose numbers add up better.



George W. Bush by Roman Genn

Bush wins that contest. His estimate of the "cost" of his tax cut—he assumes federal revenues would be $1.3 trillion lower over ten years if it passes—is high; he doesn't factor in the effects of the increased economic growth his tax cut would cause. Gore, on the other hand, consistently lowballs the price tag on his programs. He says his universal-preschool program would cost $50 billion over ten years. Even sympathetic observers, such as Isabel Sawhill of the Brookings Institution, say it could easily cost twice as much.

Gore estimates that his Retirement Savings Plus program would, when fully phased in, cost $35 billion a year. Now Gore's proposal, designed to increase savings among low-income workers, may be a good idea. But it's more expensive than Gore lets on. If half the eligible population participates in the program, as Gore adviser Alan Blinder has suggested is likely, the cost will be closer to $75 billion a year. Gore's cost estimate could be true only if very few people signed up—in which case Gore is overhyping the program.

Gore also fudges the numbers by double-counting $66 billion in revenues from tobacco taxes: He earmarks them for an initiative to increase funding for health research, and then uses them again for the rest of the budget. Nor is the campaign's double-counting confined to its own budget. It uses the same method to attack Bush's tax cut. The campaign pads its estimate of the size of Bush's tax cut by adding in tax cuts passed by the Republican Congress. But some of the congressional tax cuts are already in Bush's plan, and are therefore counted twice.

The upshot is that over ten years, Bush cuts taxes and increases spending by $1.6 trillion and pays off $1.5 trillion of debt, with $900 billion left to finance new personal retirement accounts in Social Security. The cost of Gore's program is, as mentioned, hard to calculate, but it could easily reach $2.5 trillion or even higher. The prevailing assumption that Gore would pay down more debt than Bush would is probably wrong.

Then there's the question of specificity. For more than a year, Bush has been accused of vagueness. Gore has taken up the charge. "What's good for the American people is to have an adult, intelligent discussion of the specifics of these issues," he said in late August, implicitly slamming Bush. It's true that Bush has sometimes been coy. He has not committed to a plan to reform Social Security. He argues, reasonably if conveniently,

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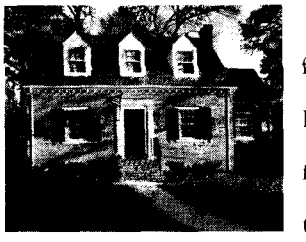

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that a presidential candidate should get the public behind the idea and leave the details to be worked out with Congress. Bush refuses to say whether he even *hopes* that any justices he names to the Supreme Court would vote to overturn *Roe* v. *Wade*. Gore, on the other hand, has sometimes suggested that he would have a pro-*Roe* litmus test for judges: That's certainly specific.

■

The Bush campaign has been, in general, pretty high-minded. Maybe too high-minded.

■

But all in all, it's Bush who has offered the most detailed plans. Gore, too, has failed to offer a plan to save Social Security—or rather, he has offered a non-plan: He transfers IOUs to Social Security but doesn't say anything about how they would be paid off. It's a meaningless accounting gimmick that does nothing to make the program easier to finance. Gore has something similar in mind for Medicare. In September, the Bush campaign released a comparison of the candidates' platforms: Bush's had 93 specific proposals while Gore had only 74. And Gore refuses to provide details that would make it possible to evaluate his plans. The Joint Committee on Taxation says some of his major tax proposals are so vague that their costs cannot be estimated.

Bush's speeches, too, are more serious than Gore's. Bush's major speeches are extremely well-written; they have themes; they advance arguments. Gore's convention speech was written, as Peggy Noonan remarked, in a kind of vapid "politico-bureaucratese." It was a rambling and repetitive list of payoffs to interest groups (including a public conceived as an interest group). Often, Gore's rhetoric does not even rise to the level of "adult discussion." His attack on "Big Oil," for instance, pretends that "price gouging" is the explanation for rising gas prices. But companies generally try to set prices that will maximize their profits. Their executives don't just wake up one morning and decide that it's time to make money. There is enough anticorporate sentiment and free-floating paranoia in our culture that Gore's "populist" rhetoric has an audience; but surely Gore himself knows better.

Bush has not demonized any group in this way. Some of Bush's rhetoric, it is true, has tended toward the utopian. He promises to "leave no child behind," which is impossible; he indulges the fantasy that politics need not involve division. Gore's sentimentality is less pronounced, but it is more programmatic in its implications. The vice president, like President Clinton, is fond of the formulation that "no one should ever have to choose between," say, filling a prescription and putting food on the dinner table. But senior citizens spend, on average, $1,200 dining out and only $673 on drugs each year. To suggest that they should never have to reallocate those funds as prices change is demagoguery.

Of course, Bush too panders and cuts corners. One doubts that he really thinks the Violence Against Women Act, which he has recently said should be reauthorized, is a good law. His campaign has claimed that he vetoed an HMO-regulation bill in Texas because it wasn't strict enough, when he really vetoed it for being too strict. His budget includes a suspiciously specific figure for savings from "government reform." But this is penny-ante stuff. The Bush campaign has been, in general, pretty high-minded.

Maybe too high-minded. Dick Cheney was a great pick for vice president; as a vice-presidential candidate he hasn't been nearly as helpful to Bush as Joe Lieberman has been to Gore. While Bush may be right in his pious declaration that the Strategic Petroleum Reserve exists to serve national security, Gore might score points by using it to cater to voters' momentary wishes. It may be noble of Bush to concentrate on helping the poor through school choice, tax credits, and aid to charities—but Gore has zeroed in on the middle class in a more politically profitable way. And Bush, in his evident desire to make the campaign turn on matters of the spirit rather than of the economy, can get downright ethereal.

So the good news for Bush partisans is that their man has taken a far more serious approach than Gore to governing the country. The bad news is that it might lose him the election. **NR**

■ CAMPAIGN 2000 II ■

Working-Class Act

Why Gore's new populism is selling

JOHN O'SULLIVAN

COULD it be that Al Gore's recent swing into populist politics developed in a single moment, when he looked in the mirror? No, really, this may be a serious insight. Although we know that an honest biography of Young Al would read like a fun-free version of Eloise at the Plaza, Gore might well have smiled enigmatically at his mirror image and thought aloud: I look just like a socialist-realism painting of a New Soviet Worker.

And he does. Our vice president has the oversimplified and sculpted features of a standard Proletarian Hero, the identical brawny physique straining uncomfortably against his suit, and the kind of visionary gaze into the middle distance that in real life suggests a man who left his contact lenses on the bedside table.

Show me a Dawn of Progress, he doubtless thought as he glimpsed his own rugged grandeur, and watch me stride ruthlessly towards it. It might well have dawned on him in that epiphany that—though a child of Privilege himself—he would not look completely implausible as the People's Tribune in the fight against it.

Looks apart, of course, Gore is not the most convincing populist. Born into a wealthy political home in the segregated South, brought up in a smart hotel in the dark heart of the Beltway, educated in the Iviest of Leagues, and drawing large incomes from his family's connections with the oil and tobacco industries, he seems ill-suited to lead the workers and peasants of Middle America against the corporate behemoths, the malefactors of great wealth, the economic royalists, the power elite,

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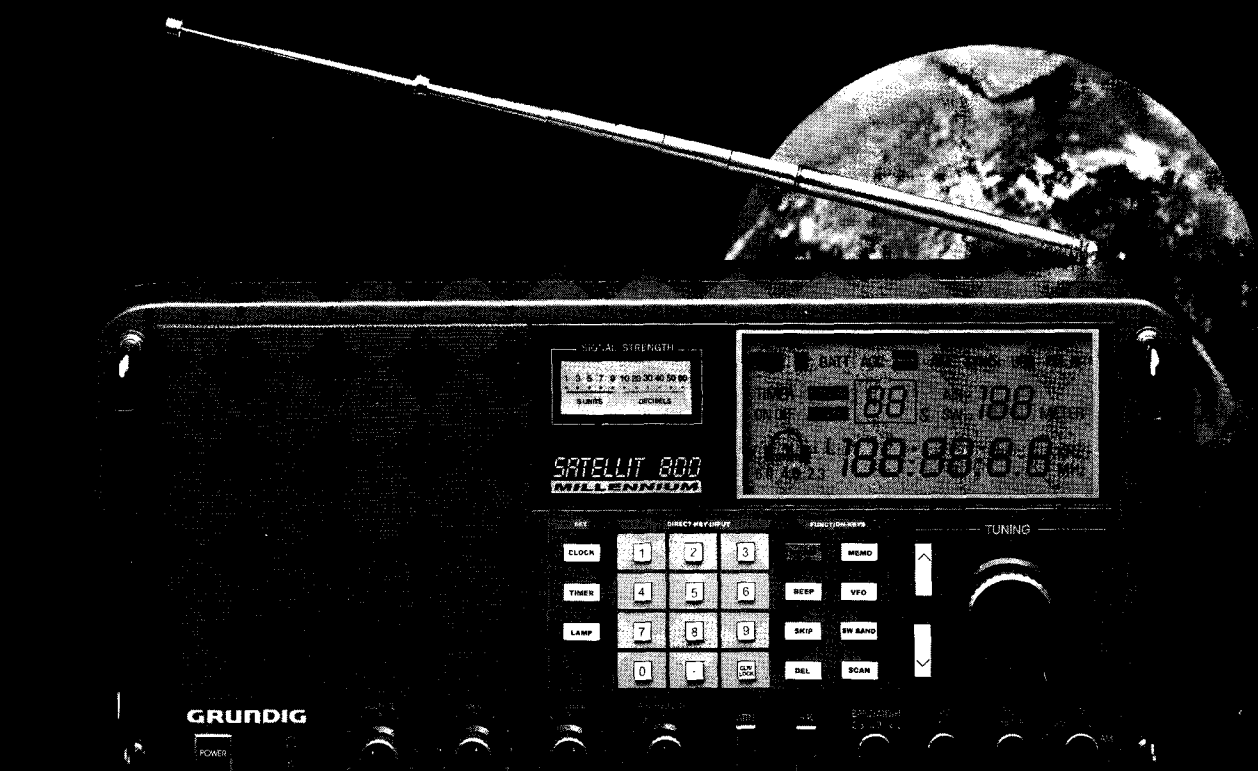

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and some of his closest friends and contributors.

Nor is his record as a congressman, senator, and vice president helpful in this regard. Gore has been more or less identified with two broad political groups during his time in Washington—the moderate New Democrats with their treasured links to corporate America, and the radical-environmentalist pressure groups. Or, to put it another way, he has been the faithful ally both of the economic elite and of the cultural elite. Normally these groups are at daggers drawn, of course, but they join together in hating the forces of populism.

Only dire necessity, therefore, would seem likely to propel Prince Albert into an alliance with polyester politics. Recall, however, that dire necessity dominated the scene leading up to the Democratic convention. Whereupon Gore swallowed hard, strode to the podium, kissed his wife, and denounced the oil industry, tobacco firms, pharmaceutical companies, and HMOs on behalf of the little guy.

Just how dire was necessity, however? Well, it was pretty dire. Gore had wrapped up most of the (recently) traditional Democratic constituencies and was still 17 points behind in the polls. He could still make up valuable ground by wooing the women's vote, which he triumphantly managed to do with The Kiss. But his real opportunity lay with the white working class.

As the left-wing political analysts, Ruy Teixeira and Joel Rogers, pointed out in their book, *America's Forgotten Majority: Why the White Working Class Still Matters*, this bloc accounts for 55 percent of the electorate. It had been the foundation of the political coalitions that kept America Democratic from FDR to LBJ, Republican from Nixon to George Bush the First, and confused when Ross Perot gained a plurality of its votes in 1992. Gore was not doing well with such voters: He was even with George W. Bush among white working-class women, but losing two-to-one among the men.

But the good news for him was that these voters are volatile. Their support for the GOP dropped 22 percent between 1990 and 1992, as a result of President Bush breaking his tax pledge and then presiding over a mini-recession. And the Democrats lost 20 percent of these votes between 1992 and 1994, when a newly elected President Clinton adopted such culturally liberal policies as "gays in the military."

So these voters were up for grabs, and—as Joel Rogers noted—the Democrats were suddenly more appealing to them, as a result of the Clinton years. Thanks to Clinton, Democrats were no longer seen as soft on crime or hostile to welfare reform. With a little effort, the party might reverse the view that had begun to take hold with these voters that the government did something for every group but them. Hence the vice president's passionate reinvention of himself as New Proletarian Gore.

■

Republicans have failed to counter Gore's new populism with a strong visceral appeal of their own.

■

And, sure enough, he rose rapidly in the polls, took back his lead among women voters, and even began to eat into the Republican base of white men.

Still, this strategy is not without its risks. Gore has been identified, after all, with such pro-business initiatives of the Clinton years as NAFTA and ratifying the World Trade Organization. Big Labor is prepared to forget these lapses in the larger interest of keeping out the Republicans, but a whiff of hypocrisy lingers over the campaign. What has made Gore's new populism relatively successful, however, is the failure of the Republicans to exploit these weaknesses or to counter with a strong visceral appeal of their own to these voters. Look at three such failures.

First, most American voters now own stocks, either directly or through pension funds. Many of the blue-collar workers who would once have been attracted by anticorporate rhetoric now have their own 401(k)s and follow the market avidly. So, even when he limits his populist attacks to such politically unpopular targets as Big Tobacco, Gore still takes a risk that he will alarm not merely the markets but also the millions of blue-collar investors. Yet people do not always realize their interests spontaneously. So the investor-voters won't necessarily be alarmed unless the Republican candidate points out forcefully that the Democrats threaten their investments—which, of course, the GOP would safeguard. So far the Bush campaign has been slow to make such points. Bush should borrow from Lady Thatcher's rhetoric in the 1987 British election, when she said: "Labour believes in turning workers *against* owners; we believe in turning workers *into* owners."

Second, as several reporters have noticed, when Gore is addressing white blue-collar voters, he never mentions the words "affirmative action." That is doubtless because these target voters are what Frederick Lynch calls the "invisible victims" of racial preferences. They (and their wives) know they have been denied jobs and promotion because of them. And they are accordingly resentful. In political terms, however, that means little unless a candidate is offering them relief. Not only is Bush not offering such relief; his campaign is based on avoiding the issue altogether. The net effect is to persuade white working-class males that they can expect no help from Bush on race preferences, and might as well go with Gore in return for his pro-labor stance.

Third, there is a general weakness in the Bush campaign when it comes to *moral* populism. Traditionally, Democrats have appealed to *economic* populists by denouncing corporate elites, while the GOP has wooed moral populists by assailing the cultural elites of Hollywood. Gore is a tempting target for moral-populist attacks as a defender of partial-birth abortion, gay rights, etc. Witness his recent squirming on whether he supports "gay marriage" (yes and no) and his naming of Sen. Lieberman, which was designed to set at rest the anxieties of traditionalists.

But Bush seems disinclined to arouse such anxieties because they might make him look like, well, a Republican. Which allows Gore to make inroads into the white working-class vote on economic grounds, as the only populist in town.

Of course, the towns he appeals to most are Washington and Hollywood; whether his act will play in Peoria is still an open question. **NR**

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■ CAMPAIGN 2000 III ■

Unhappy at Any Speed

The sad politics of Ralph Nader

JOHN J. MILLER

IT'S easy to pity Ralph Nader. Not because his Green-party presidential candidacy took a nosedive the moment Vice President Gore hit the comeback trail in August, or even because he now appears unlikely to top a few percentage points in November—although either of these might have been reason enough. No, it's easy to pity Nader simply because he looks so sad—all the time. He rarely smiles. The dangling bags beneath his eyes make him appear permanently hagridden. His stooped shoulders seem to carry a crushing, invisible weight. Writing in *The Nation*, Ruth Conniff compared Nader to Abraham Lincoln, and there's something to it: He's tall and lean, his face is worn and wrinkly, and his clothes are constantly rumpled. If he grew a beard and put on a stovepipe hat, he'd be at home in one of those doleful Mathew Brady photos of Old Abe.

Nader is now trying to turn people's pity for him into a political advantage. He's running as a victim candidate: Everywhere he goes, he grumbles in his deep voice about being locked out of the presidential debates between Gore and George W. Bush. On September 25, the day about 100 minor celebrities formally announced they were supporting Nader, their message was: Let Ralph on stage. Nader wants to save the public from having to watch, as he routinely puts it, "the drab debate the dreary." Why not include the droopy?

This is probably Nader's most popular issue. He cites polls showing that most people would like to see third- and fourth-party candidates in the debates. And this, in fact, may be the only hope Nader has for meeting his self-imposed goal of attracting 5 percent of the overall presidential vote this fall and thereby qualifying the Green party for federal matching funds in 2004. That seems like a modest objective, but Nader may not reach it. Has a populist campaign ever been less popular?

Nader himself is an anti-candidate: He doesn't do things that virtually every other politician does, such as talk in the first person. You wouldn't know from listening to him that he's the son of immigrants, that his father was an autoworker, or that his mother ran a restaurant and bakery. Joe Lieberman could make a whole speech from these biographical elements; in fact, that's what he did during the Democratic convention. But most Nader supporters probably don't even know what state their man is from. (It's Connecticut, but he has lived in Washington, D.C., for years.)

Ralph Nader by David Smith

In some ways, Nader needs no introduction. *Life* magazine named him one of the 100 most influential people of the 20th century for his well-known work on consumer issues. He's been around politics his whole life—mainly crusading for new regulations on, well, just about everything—but he's never been inside the political world like he is now, and he's ill at ease. At a press conference in September, he appeared beside Nora Pouillon, described in campaign literature as "one of the world's foremost chefs," who endorsed him this way: "He believes in the same things as I do. We have to pay attention to our food." During the session with reporters that followed, Nader stepped away from the podium between questions—as if there was a single person in the room who might have preferred to hear more from the cook. In August, when the *San Francisco Chronicle* inquired how a lifelong bachelor with no children could connect with ordinary voters, Nader sounded wistfully weird. "I have millions of kids, all over the world, and I've been taking care of them, and trying to help them," he said. "I just don't charge for that kind of day care."

Nader is, nonetheless, capable of inspiring people. He's drawn some of the largest crowds of the political season, such as the 12,000 who showed up at a rally in Boston on October 1. His speeches can seem interminable—he spoke for nearly two hours when the Greens nominated him in June—and they're incredibly substantive. Most pols aren't comfortable with statistics unless they have a sheet of talking points in their grip; Nader can pull numbers out of his head on everything from incarceration rates to agriculture policy.

What compels his current bid is his intense dislike for the Democrats. The toughest anti-Gore campaign rhetoric this fall isn't coming out of Austin, but out of Nader's mouth: He has referred to "forked-tongued, Pinocchio-nosed Al Gore." The vice president's speeches on the

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LEFT.

"We must continue the work my father began. Education is the key to freedom and opportunity. We basically have one supplier, the public education system, and it has become a huge bureaucracy. This bureaucracy has to be challenged. Fairness demands that every child, not just the rich, has access to an education that will help them achieve their dreams."
—**Martin Luther King III**,
President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference

RIGHT.

"I totally believe in public education. Yet somewhere along the line we have come to equate our hugely important commitment to public education – or what we might more accurately call 'educating the public' – with a single supplier government monopoly model. As we all know, monopolies have always produced bad products at a high price. The education monopoly is no different."
—**The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger**,
Chairman, Kissinger Associates

LEFT.

"No parent should have to forsake their child's education for the sake of a system. No child can afford to wait even one year for a quality education. The child does not exist to serve the system – the system should serve the child."
—**Dr. Dorothy Height**, Chair and President Emeritus,
National Council of Negro Women

RIGHT.

"I've also seen too many schools that are failing. They are trapped in fossilized bureaucracies… Let's use innovation and competition…to help give our children the best education possible."
—**General Colin L. Powell**, USA (Ret.)
Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

LEFT.

"I have always believed that parents should be in charge of their children's education. If parents can't choose which schools their children go to, or what subjects they are taught, or who teaches them, then what exactly are they in charge of?"
—**The Honorable John B. Breaux**, United States Senator (D)

RIGHT.

"Freedom and self-governance are about making choices. The greatness of our free enterprise system is based on the undeniable principle that competition produces excellence. It's time that competition be allowed to work its wonders in the educational arena."
—**The Honorable John McCain**, United States Senator (R)

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Both left and right agree that there's something seriously wrong with our public education system.

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environment, he says, are "shameless bulls**t." (Nader possibly admires President Clinton even less, calling him "a pimp" on trade with China, berating him for "some of the most intensive demonstrations of political cowardliness in American history," and volunteering that he supported impeachment.)

His harsh words pose a threat for Democrats. There was a time this summer when several polls had him hovering around 10 percent in California—high enough to tip the state's electoral votes to Bush. Signs reading "Vote Nader, Elect Bush" started to pop up at his functions. Everywhere he went, people asked him whether he would regret being responsible for helping Bush appoint the next few Supreme Court justices. The answer was no. "The Democrats have decayed beyond regeneration," he says.

■

Of course, no matter who gains the White House, Ralph Nader himself won't be happy.

■

Nader thinks he offers an important alternative to the Democrats, and that his cause isn't getting the attention it deserves. When a reporter from the *Providence Journal* asked him in September why his poll numbers were so low, Nader snapped, "How many times has this campaign appeared on page one of the *Providence Journal*?" Questions about the political horse race drive him mad. "The press is not reporting our positions on issues," he complains.

Part of the problem is that he has a wealth of positions and can't stick to one or two of them at a time. After listening to him for a few minutes, it's possible to come away with notes like this: Universal health insurance? For it! The death penalty? Against it! Legalizing marijuana? For it! Free trade? Against it! Solar power? For it! Defense spending? Against it! And on, and on.

At the very moment he might begin to reach a certain constituency, he zips off in another direction. He can trash corporate welfare as if he were a scholar at the Cato Institute—but before a libertarian has time to put his name on a campaign e-mail list, Nader moves on to why the U.S. must pull out of NAFTA and bust up Microsoft.

This isn't Nader's first run for president. He was the Green party's candidate four years ago, but spent less than $5,000, didn't really campaign, and attracted about 1 percent of the vote. (Colorado arguably went to Bob Dole rather than Clinton because Nader was on the ballot.) This time around, Nader has a $5 million budget and a hectic schedule (he's been to all 50 states), but that 5 percent threshold remains a long shot. His best-case scenario was probably a blowout—a situation in which voters thought they knew by Labor Day who was going to win, and therefore felt their ballots were more expendable than they are during a tight race. Yet this year's election appears to be the closest in at least two decades.

Nader may yet play a role he covets. He admits that he would like to see the Democrats capture the House, and it's possible that he will propel some people turned off by two-party politics to show up on Election Day, pull the lever for him, and then vote Democratic (there are only 58 Greens running for Congress). It's not inconceivable that this effect could influence who controls the House, or at least a state legislature or two.

And Nader may be well positioned no matter who gains the White House. If Bush wins, Nader will be able to argue that Gore should have run as a progressive liberal instead of as a New Democrat (i.e., a Clinton without the ethical handicaps). If Gore wins, analysts might credit Nader's threat with encouraging Gore to launch the anti-corporate broadsides that finally brought home his base.

But that's looking on the bright side of things. No matter what happens, of course, Nader himself won't be happy. Lewis H. Lapham of *Harper's* magazine recently asked him whether his brand of politics didn't set him up for loads of disappointment. "Maybe it would if I were into mood changes," replied Nader—a man who's always disappointed, and looks it. **NR**

■ **CAMPAIGN 2000 IV** ■

Where's the Outrage?

The problem with the 'character' issue

KATE O'BEIRNE

On a recent *Tonight Show*, Jay Leno opened with fulsome praise for the vice president, before noticing in mock surprise who was holding his cue cards. "It's the man who invented the cue card, Al Gore. Wow. Nice to see you, sir," Leno greeted his guest. Thus, Al Gore's serial dishonesty was reduced to his pattern of making harmless boasts that he now pokes fun at in order to appear attractively self-deprecating. Previously, at the Los Angeles convention, Gore hoped to define the character issue down by portraying himself as a good family man, in contrast to Bill Clinton.

As the Bush campaign now recognizes, Gore was never a credible proxy for Bill Clinton's manifest shortcomings, but the Bush campaign's recent emphasis on issues doesn't represent an abandonment of the character issue. Over the next several weeks, the campaign will be struggling with how to remind voters about Al Gore's own fundamental dishonesty, without courting a backlash from those still uncommitted nonpartisans weary of "partisan attacks" and "name-calling."

The most promising strategy for the Bush campaign is to take immediate advantage of each new example of Gore's apparent inability to stick to the truth. Gore's attempts at self-rehabilitation were set back by his recent deceptions about the cost of his mother-in-law's prescriptions, his mother's union lullabies, and his role in designing the Strategic Petroleum Reserve; the Bush campaign was quick to pounce on these falsehoods. "There is a resistance to Gore, but people don't want us reminding them of his character, because they'd

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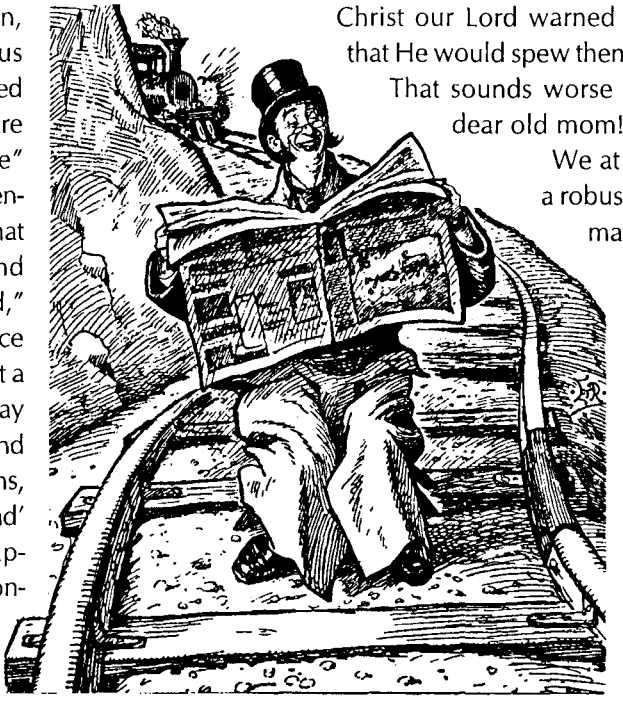
Tired of Fuzzy, Feel-Good Catholic Journalism ?

There was a curious exchange in the Nov. 28, 1999 *Our Sunday Visitor* (*OSV*) between letter-writer Jack Ferguson and M. Francis Mannion, who's been writing the Q&A feature in *OSV*. Ferguson complained that certain of Mannion's answers are "fuzzy." Indeed! For example, Mannion said that "God...may be referred to as 'she'.... However....God is normatively understood and spoken of as 'Father'.... There is a question of proper balance...." Balance between what? Between feminism and Revelation?

Ferguson asked Mannion, "Why can't you give it to us straight...?" Ferguson concluded with this indictment: "You are too afraid to offend people" (which could be said of *OSV* generally). Mannion answered that he is indeed afraid to offend people, "appropriately afraid," adding that "I avoid the practice whenever I can, not thinking it a virtue." Mannion went on to say that he tries to give "subtle" and "balanced" answers to questions, which "often creates a 'both/and' rather than an 'either/or' approach to issues." Mannion concluded by saying that if he wrote in the no-nonsense manner Ferguson was urging, "My mother...would slap me...."



Obviously, Mannion's mother is *not afraid to offend people*: A slap in the face is quite offensive. Nothing fuzzy about her! And, in an ironic way, she's onto something that applies directly to Catholic journalism. The Church is deeply divided between the orthodox and the dissenters — the situation *is* "either/or." In this context, fuzzy Catholic publications such as *OSV* and many diocesan papers which try to please everyone will ultimately please no one. Moreover, if Catholic periodicals avoid offending anyone, they will likely not inspire or energize anyone either. Which is why feel-good Catholic journalism is in decline.

St. Peter noted that the Gospel is inherently a "rock of offense" (1 Pet. 2:8). Indeed, inoffensive writing about the Faith could have dire consequences, for Christ our Lord warned "the lukewarm" (the fuzzy?) that He would spew them out of His mouth (Rev. 3:16). That sounds worse than a slap in the face from dear old mom!

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rather not think about it," a Bush strategist explains; but, when Gore himself reminds people about his willingness to lie, the Bush camp is convinced they can safely adopt a "there he goes again" tone that reinforces the negative view voters already have about Gore's truthfulness.

Gov. Bush's reluctance to affix the label Al Gore so richly deserves was evident when Larry King recently pressed him on whether he thought the vice president was "not truthful." Bush mentioned that Gore's support for campaign-finance reform, given the Buddhist Temple incident, was not convincing, before gently concluding, "I wouldn't say he's a liar at all. I would say inconsistent."

Many conservatives are no doubt frustrated that a candidate's well-documented dishonesty would have to be so delicately raised, when in the not too distant past, it would have been presumptively disqualifying. The evidence does suggest that the Bush camp is right to approach their opponent's lack of character gingerly; we can add this unwelcome development to the bill of particulars detailing Bill Clinton's poisonous effect on our politics.

■

The Bush camp is convinced they can safely adopt a 'there he goes again' tone.

■

When it comes to the importance of character in politics, Clinton's destructive legacy has been threefold. First of all, much of the public still prefers to regard the embarrassing impeachment ordeal as a partisan slugfest, rather than confront the fact that they rallied to the defense of a perjurer and predator unworthy of the presidency. Just as the public then resented the messengers, like Ken Starr and Henry Hyde, so too, the next Republican to raise character questions about the next Democrat will be an unwelcome reminder of the public's failure to confront a distasteful truth. Far better to dismiss criticisms as partisan bickering than confront the fact that if Republicans are right about Al Gore's unfitness for office, maybe they were right about Bill Clinton as well.

Second, some voters have concluded that a president's character just doesn't matter very much. The public has enjoyed a great economy and is satisfied with the policy agenda during Clinton's tenure, and so "Honor and integrity in the White House are luxury goods," as another Bush strategist reluctantly concludes. This strategist recognizes that voters claim to value character and continue to profess a desire for moral leadership in the White House, but he sees little evidence that these high-minded ideals really determine how people vote.

Third, part of the debris from Clinton's violation of the public trust (over what the White House successfully spun as purely private behavior) is public cynicism about the trustworthiness of all politicians. After all, one Republican House Speaker and one almost-Speaker were guilty of the "same" adulterous behavior. In focus groups conducted by Republicans, voters reminded about Al Gore's lies, evasions, and exaggerations frequently chalk up his behavior to being a typical politician.

Rick Lazio's campaign against Hillary Clinton provides further evidence that the Bush campaign's cautious treatment of the character issue might be smart politics in this year's scandal-weary environment. Throughout September, the Lazio campaign ran a series of issue ads on Hillary's record on education and taxes, with the tag line, "Hillary Clinton—You Just Can't Trust Her." Some Lazio advisers now believe that the ads might be too forthright even for New Yorkers used to sharp-elbowed politics. One strategist fears that even the large number of people with a negative view of the First Lady see the ads as "piling on."

The public has also been softened up to believe that legitimate criticisms about character are raised by candidates who don't dare talk about "the issues." This last is the media's favorite assertion, owing to their firm belief that Republicans have to talk about character because all of the top issues favor the Democrats.

But Al Gore is tied with his challenger, despite the good economy and the prominence of issues that typically benefit Democrats, chiefly because of voters' resistance to his unappealing personality and reputation for dishonesty. Over the next crucial weeks, the Bush campaign will be watching for Gore blunders they can use to bolster these negative perceptions, while, proactively, they will be using issues like tax relief to point out that Al Gore's record and promises are not to be trusted. "We have to convince voters that Gore's lack of credibility does matter, because it affects the issues they care about," a GOP strategist explains.

Bush currently holds only a small advantage when voters are asked about the candidates' honesty. The outrage—against the fact that a fundamentally decent man would be tied on character with someone so lacking in integrity—should be directed at Bill Clinton. We'll soon know whether Clinton will have a successor who will reverse his shameful legacy—or one who will continue it. **NR**

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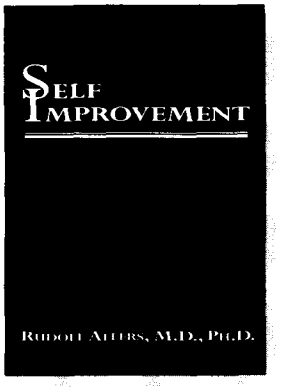

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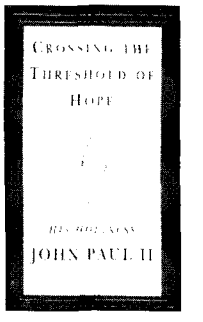

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■ CULTURE WATCH ■

The Cookie Crumbles

The Girl Scouts go PC

KATHRYN JEAN LOPEZ

EVERYONE knows about the Boy Scouts, now one of the most controversial groups in America. But what about the Girl Scouts? All sugar and spice and everything nice, plus annual cookie sales, right? Not quite. The Girl Scouts of America have avoided the beleaguered status of the Boy Scouts only because the organization has surrendered to exactly the cultural forces the Boy Scouts are resisting. The Girl Scouts' leaders hope to make their youthful charges the shock troops of an ongoing feminist revolution.

It's been a long slide for the Girl Scouts. First, as James Davison Hunter points out in his new book *The Death of Character*, they dropped "loyalty" from their oath in 1972, in favor of "I will do my best to be honest and fair." In 1975, a Catholic archdiocese cut off all support of the Girl Scouts because of their sex-ed program. In 1993, the Girl Scouts made "God" optional in the Girl Scout Promise: "On my honor, I will try: To serve God and my country, to help people at all times and to live by the Girl Scout Law." (The Boy Scouts, meanwhile, have been sued over keeping God obligatory in their oath.)

Today, the Girl Scouts is arguably one of the most politically correct organizations in the country. Its executive director, Marsha Johnson Evans, has impeccable feminist credentials: She had a 29-year career in the Navy, during which she earned the title of rear admiral, only the second woman ever to do so. As head recruiter for the Navy, she was the mother of the 12-12-5 affirmative-action policy, a mandate to make the Navy look more like America: 12 percent African-American, 12 percent Hispanic, and 5 percent Asian/Pacific.

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According to Elaine Donnelly, president of the Center for Military Readiness, Evans "demanded quotas with full implementation when the liberal control of the Navy was at its peak. She is very much a feminist, and was promoted and thrived in the Clinton military."

Evans's Scouts march predictably leftward on almost everything. The Girl Scouts organization supports the Title IX legislation—which mandates gender equity in sports—in both the nation's capital (in 1998–99, the organization spent $56,800 on lobbying) and in its own literature. The Girl Scout Constitution includes a ringing endorsement of affirmative action in "recruitment, hiring, training, and promoting." Girl Scouts and Girl Scout moms are anti-gun, and were, naturally enough, represented in the anti-gun Million Mom March.

A Senior Scout resource book reads like an insert from YM or *Seventeen*. Scattered throughout the margins are a semester's worth of themes for after-school specials, including such statistical nuggets as, "One-fifth of girls have used diet pills, more than one in six have forced themselves to vomit, and half have skipped a meal in order to lose weight." Exercises include working through how the Girl Scout Promise and Law relate to such situations as "Supporting a decision to pull a life-support system from a dying relative" and "Ending a pregnancy." Some activities "you can do as a Girl Scout to address contemporary issues" include "organiz[ing] an event to make people aware of gender bias" or "help[ing] organize an Earth Day celebration."

"The core values remain the same, but throughout its history Girl Scouting has evolved to meet the needs and interests of girls today," says Karen Solzak Rice, a spokesman for the Mt. Wilson Vista Council of Arcadia, Calif. "Today's Girl Scout activities help girls grow up strong and give them skills for success in today's world." Girl Scouts now can earn the "Ms. Fix-It" badge for learning how to fix a leak, rewire an electrical appliance, or re-caulk a window, and the "Car Care" badge for checking fluids, filling tires to the proper pressure, and performing safety checks. And badges, which vary from council to council, go way beyond selling cookies. There's a "Domestic Violence Awareness" badge, as well as badges for stress management, for "becoming a teen," and a "Girl Power!" badge sponsored by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Girls can earn a "Decisions for Your Life" badge for participating in activities relating to teen pregnancy, including carrying around a raw egg for a designated period of time.

Victimization is central to the Girl Scout worldview, as the organization continues to propagate the now discredited notion that the nation's girls are a tribe of desperate Ophelias. Citing a survey from the American Association of University Women that has since been debunked, the Girl Scouts assures girls in its literature that teachers discriminate against them in the classroom, calling on boys more often. The new Girl Scout Research Institute, a clearinghouse of "research and polling information on girls," as National President Connie Matsui describes it, has just released its inaugural study, "Girls Speak Out: Teens Before Their Time," focusing on the supposed crisis of girls. Dr. Whitney Roban, a clinical psychologist at the research institute, advises parents: "You are hurting your daughter by trying to protect her. Sit down with your daughter and watch *Dawson's Creek* and the MTV Music Awards. Talk about it. It will be very revealing."

So why isn't the Girl Scouts, like the Boy Scouts, being sued and protested against for not allowing lesbian Scout leaders? Because they have them. The Girl Scouts does not have "a discrimination policy," as they like to put it—Girl Scouts doors are open to all, gay Scout leaders and girls.

Girl Scout policy forbids sex on Girl Scouts time. But the book *On My Honor: Lesbians Reflect on Their Scouting Experience*, published in 1997, is filled with coming-of-age stories sparked by gay encounters in the Girl Scouts. Along with an essay entitled "All I Really Need to Know About Being a Lesbian I Learned at Girl Scout Camp," and various stories of "butch" counselors who "wore men's clothes and had slicked back short hair," is testimony to the prevalence of lesbians in Girl Scouting. One writer remembers: "By

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the time I was a junior counselor, Mic was assistant camp director and her gruff, deep-voiced directives no longer scared me. I didn't know that most of the counselors were lesbians." Others remember how sleepovers and camping trips were opportunities for same-sex sexual experimentation. Girl Scout staffers writing in the book claim that roughly one in three of the Girl Scouts' paid professional staff is lesbian.

The organization itself is not shy about the issue. One resource book for Scouts informs its young readers: "Some girls have sexual attractions or desires for people of the same sex." Meanwhile, the Patriots' Trail Girl Scout Council in Massachusetts held a volunteer workshop this year on sexual orientation, working in tandem with the Gay Lesbian Youth Support project "to educate us about overcoming barriers that may exist in our organization and instilling a culture that is inviting to all girls," according to Mary Jo Kane, spokesman for the council. The Girl Scout council developed a mentoring program "for lesbian women and girls dealing with sexual identity." Says Kane, "I can only imagine the energy and leadership that would be unleashed—in society—if we spent our time and resources encouraging our girls—and everyone—to be visible, authentic, and bring 100 percent of themselves to all their experiences."

■

There are currently 2.7 million Girl Scouts in the U.S. That's a lot of liberal feminists to look forward to.

■

The *St. Paul Pioneer Press* reported this summer on a vivid example of the "authenticity" of today's Scouts:

> For those of us who remember the Girl Scouts as the quiet girls in class who wore their green uniforms on Wednesdays, encountering Katze Ludeke can be quite an eye-opener. She seldom wears her sash for St. Croix Valley Troop 1256, preferring to accessorize with army boots and a lavender bra strap that slides persistently down her bare shoulder. Rather than stitching doilies and tea cozies, the talented seamstress has created her own costume company specializing in "fetish-wear." Instead of going for the Gold Award—the Girl Scout's highest honor—by reading to senior citizens, Ludeke pushed to start her own support group for at-risk teens called Queer Youth Exist. For her Gold Award application . . . Ludeke is submitting her work with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender teens, with the support of her troop.

The eyes—and ire—of the world may well be on the wrong Scouts. There are currently 2.7 million Girl Scouts in the U.S. That's a lot of liberal feminists to look forward to. In a speech shortly after becoming executive director, the Girl Scouts' Marty Evans boasted, "We're not your mother's Girl Scout troop." No kidding. **NR**

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■ CULTURE WATCH II ■

Id TV

On MTV, it's always Spring Break

JOHN PODHORETZ

THE term "uncool" could have been invented for Al Gore, a man so earnest in demeanor that his idea of a good time is hosting dinners where the attendees solemnly discuss the use of metaphor. Those unfortunate enough to have seen the footage of Al dancing with his wife, Tipper, at the 1993 inaugural balls witnessed the embodiment of every cliché about clueless white men—he moved, without reference to the pop music blaring from the stage, in a herky-jerky pseudo-waltz, pumping Tipper's arm up and down like a piston while she smiled gamely.

So when Gore took the stage at the University of Michigan the other week for a town meeting cosponsored by the cable channel MTV, a real clash of cultures was taking place. In a similar MTV forum eight years ago, Bill Clinton had entered the precincts of coolness for the first time—a place he might not have been expected to gain entry to, considering that he claimed the soporific clarinetist Kenny G as his favorite musician—when he smiled his mischievous smile and admitted to wearing briefs rather than boxers. The moment was crucial for Clinton, since it began the process of lowering his soon-to-be-presidency to a level that would make it possible for him to survive his sleazy hijinks with Monica Lewinsky six years later.

Whatever else one may think of Al Gore, that sort of thing isn't his field. The 52-year-old man with the mien of the kindly but out-of-it dad who tries to "relate" to his rebellious teenage kids while they roll their eyes in obnoxious frustration was entering the belly of the beast. Gore took a stab at appealing to the MTV viewership with a well-prepared answer to an audience member's question about what's currently in his CD player. "Sister Hazel," he said, naming a soft-rock band of the moment whose music it's inconceivable he's actually been sampling on the campaign plane, but whom his daughter Kristin probably loves. The audience cheered, as it was supposed to, but despite his weather-beaten earth-tone shirt and an introduction pointing out breathlessly that as a young man he smoked "the herb," Gore was still very much himself.

For above all, Al Gore wants to be serious and be taken seriously—and MTV has become the open and undying enemy of all things serious and the champion and promoter of all things frivolous.

Ask people what they think of first when MTV is mentioned, and they will probably say "music videos"—understandable when you consider that MTV stands for "Music Television." Indeed, the recording industry and MTV are inseparable. The channel is crucial for the manufacture of new stars (most recently the bubblegum queens Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears and the ugly-spirited white rapper Eminem) and the preservation of its own, now-venerable Hall of Famers (like Madonna, the first enduring superstar of the MTV era).

But most of MTV's broadcast day is taken up with other programming, and has been for more than a decade. Despite its name, the channel is not really dedicated to music and never really has been. It's always been about cool, although the kind of cool it attempts to define has shifted radically since it first went on the air in 1981. You might say that, like Al Gore, MTV is constantly in the process of reinventing itself to stay fresh and keep its hold on a slippery American audience in a time of powerful competition.

At the time of its founding, MTV's target demographic was the twenty-something crowd, which was then preoccupied with ideas left over from the 1960s about the transcendent power of the two media that had coalesced to form the music video—artsy rock and artsy film. The channel, its videos, and its on-air announcers affected a blasé

Mr. Podhoretz is a columnist for the *New York Post* and a contributing editor of *The Weekly Standard*.

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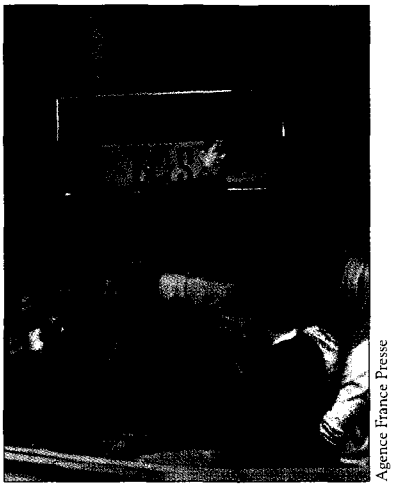
comic nihilism punctuated by tiny explosions of social conscience in the form of save-the-suffering fundraising drives and symbolic one-world gestures of the day like Live Aid, Farm Aid, and Hands Across America. This spasmodic sense of mission gave birth in 1990 to "Rock the Vote," and in 1992 to "Choose or Lose"—MTV's quadrennial efforts to get American youth interested in presidential elections and the public-policy issues under discussion in them (always, of course, from a left-liberal perspective).

MTV was so successful at defining 1980s cool that, as is the inevitable fate of all cool places, the in-the-know folk it first attracted began fleeing to more exclusive climes as their ambitious and competitive juniors (and social lessers) began crowding in to take a look. As the twentysomethings fled, MTV transformed itself into the image of cool, not for those recently graduated from college, but for kids—teenagers and socially precocious preteens.



Agence France Presse

The near-senior Backstreet Boy

The channel's avant-garde affect gave way in the 1990s to a giggly and sophomoric tone devoted almost entirely to sex and titillation, which must seem like the height of sophistication to an 11-year-old in Terre Haute looking for the secret to appearing older. On MTV, it's Spring Break in Daytona Beach every day of the year, and I mean that literally: The channel replays its coverage of hard-body college girls taking off their tops in Daytona and other hot-weather climes throughout the colder months.

The music world from the '60s to the '80s believed, without irony, that it could save the planet. In the year 2000, the music world—as represented by MTV—believes in T&A. The characteristic MTV performers of the moment are Aguilera, 19, and Spears, 18, both former Mouseketeers on the Disney Channel's *Mickey Mouse Club*, who combine faces of virginal innocence with the gyrating moves of aging strippers (one of Spears's videos was helmed by a porn-movie director named Gregory Dark). And the characteristic MTV show of the moment is an almost unimaginably raunchy late-night soap opera called *Undressed*, set at an unnamed college and featuring nightly three different badly acted vignettes about terrifically good-looking students who are either having sex, about to have sex, or just done with sex. The girls are very much in the Aguilera-Spears mold—appealing both to teenage boys for obvious reasons and teenage girls because of the admiration of teenage boys.

But the boys? The channel's male stars are mostly of the skinny and sweet-faced variety who sing prettily and pose no sexual threat whatsoever—members of boy bands like the Backstreet Boys and 'N Sync, the present-day version of past teen heartthrobs like Bobby Sherman, David and Shaun Cassidy, the young Frank Sinatra, and the young Beatles. They are popular with the girls because they offer a fantasy version of sex without fear; and while young male viewers don't seem all that interested in them, at least the boy-band members don't offer much in the way of competition for girls' true carnal hungers.

Perhaps what Gore was doing on MTV was presenting himself as a kind of near-senior version of the Backstreet Boys—or, more precisely, of MTV's afternoon host, teen heartthrob Carson Daly. If the MTV crowd would think of Gore, not as the clueless dad, but rather as the unthreatening boy grown to middle age, that might give him a leg up with them on Election Day.

But if there's one thing you can say for certain about the kind of people who get their political news from MTV, it's that they don't vote. And it's not that they're too cool to do so. You could come up with all sorts of demographic explanations for the apathy and lack of involvement of MTV viewers, but the bottom line is that, like the medium delivering the message, they're just too stupid. **NR**

■ **CONTROVERSY** ■

Trust the Trustbusters

Why conservatives are wrong about antitrust

ROBERT H. BORK

THE current debauched state of political discourse is illustrated in microcosm by the debate over antitrust enforcement. Time and again, I have found myself in conversation with conservatives about cases brought by the current administration; the consensus is invariably that the cases against, for instance, Microsoft and Visa/MasterCard are wrongheaded. These folk, to be sure, know very little about antitrust policy or the principles that guide it; what they *think* they do know is that the Clinton Department of Justice is thoroughly corrupt, and that the Antitrust Division is the most corrupt of all. I have heard and read that Joel Klein, the former division head, was merely advancing his career at the expense of heroes of free enterprise, that the judge who decided against Microsoft (a Reagan appointee, by the way) is a toady for the Justice Department, that the cases are nothing more than payoffs to trial lawyers or to Vernon Jordan, and that the companies that complained of Microsoft's and Visa/MasterCard's tactics are whining losers in the competitive marketplace. The true conservative position, it appears, is that antitrust is always Big Government trying to crush individual initiative and success.

Now I take a back seat to no one in my detestation of Bill Clinton, who would, in a well-ordered society, long ago have been hung upside down in a dungeon. But uneducated attacks on antitrust—

Mr. Bork is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, and an antitrust consultant to American Express and ProComp. He was formerly a consultant to Netscape.

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as merely a politics of envy or populism or what have you—are almost equally distasteful.

Sad to say, not even NATIONAL REVIEW is immune to these fevers. The latest example is Michael Catanzaro's piece, "The Antitrust Club" (Sept. 25), which opens with the sinister fact that Vernon Jordan is a board member of American Express and a friend of Joel Klein's, ergo . . . Ergo, what? Well, after all, Jordan tried to get Monica Lewinsky a job at American Express. Of course, she was offered no job, but that is still supposedly probative of influence peddling in the case against Visa/MasterCard. It is not even alleged that Jordan played any role whatever in encouraging that lawsuit, but still . . . The bipartisan commission Jordan was on (cochaired by James Rill, antitrust chief in the Bush administration) did not even advise about specific antitrust cases—but so what? Richard Nixon once used antitrust politically against the television networks, which proves . . .

When he gets past all this unsupported innuendo to the actual cases, Mr. Catanzaro is completely wrong about the issues. He uses the same tactic Visa/MasterCard has employed: changing the subject. Mr. Catanzaro argues that the credit-card industry is "already fiercely competitive" because there are thousands of credit-card issuers. A study—by Visa's public-relations firm—of consumer reactions to the case set out the line Visa has employed ever since. The study found that, to consumers with knowledge of the case,

> the [Justice Department's] basic case seems fair: banks *should* be allowed to do whatever they want. Similarly, even some of those who see the industry as competitive are willing to say that there is nothing wrong with it being even more competitive. That is a fundamental problem for Visa, and the main reason we need to keep people from focusing on the specifics of this case. If we cannot keep the topic to the competitiveness of the industry [card issuing, not network competition], and the facts supporting our claims, th[e]n we should divert and put the focus on American Express. We tell many of our clients who are candidates for office, when your arguments get weaker the more people know, never put yourself in a defensive position, divert and attack. The same good advice is applicable here.

Unfortunately for that diversionary tactic, this case is not about competition among bank-card issuers but about the credit-card networks that sell indispensable products and services to the banks. There are four of these networks, and two of them—Visa and MasterCard, which, admittedly, have not competed vigorously with one another—account for 75 percent of the dollar volume. Suppose that a manufacturer held 75 percent of the market and, when accused of monopolization, defended himself by saying he sold to 25,000 retailers. The fatuity of the defense would be apparent at once; so it is with Visa/MasterCard.

When antitrust enforcers look at a company's exclusionary behavior, they ask: Is the exclusion competitive, in that it creates efficiencies valuable to consumers? Or is it simply harmful to rivals, with anticonsumer results? Visa/MasterCard's conduct falls in the latter category. They have adopted rules or policies mandating that any bank that deals with American Express, Discover, or any other competitor of Visa/MasterCard will be expelled from their systems. No bank can afford that. It would have to tell all its cardholders that their Visa and MasterCard cards were suddenly useless.

The Visa/MasterCard policies fit a pattern familiar to antitrust law: They are concerted refusals to deal, or boycotts. All the banks must agree not to deal with any competitor of those networks. This is a horizontal (between competitors) agreement, made and enforced through the central agencies of Visa and MasterCard (on whose boards sit officials from the major banks) not to compete among themselves by dealing with American Express or Discover. The cases condemning such arrangements are numerous and uniform. The market size of the defendant networks is alone sufficient to condemn the agreement. So is the fact that neither Visa nor MasterCard has been able to point to any efficiency created by the agreements, other than the "efficiency" of not having to compete with American Express and Discover.

Suppose that a law firm in a city had 75 percent of the city's clients and then announced that it would cut off any

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client that dealt with another firm on any matter. The firm would be organizing and compelling an agreement among its clients not to compete with one another by using any lawyer not a member of the firm. The firm could not cite any efficiency gain other than holding all its clients. That would clearly be unlawful, and the analogy to the Visa/MasterCard policies is exact.

Mr. Catanzaro makes much of the fact that representatives of American Express met with members of the Antitrust Division. He neglects to mention that Visa and MasterCard repeatedly met with those same officials, but failed to convince them of the legality of their boycott. He also neglects to mention that the CEOs of American Express and Netscape were prominent Republicans, who could hardly be expected to exercise a lot of political influence over the Justice Department of a Democratic administration.

The Antitrust Division is, in fact, alerted to most of the cases it eventually brings by injured competitors or customers; in a huge and complex economy, there is no other equally useful source of information. But the division is very careful to winnow valid concerns from mere attempts to hobble rivals.

Mr. Catanzaro likens the Visa/MasterCard case to that against Microsoft, the supposed point of similarity being that other companies "encouraged" the Justice Department to proceed with its investigation. Of course, it is equally true that Microsoft and its allies encouraged the Justice Department to give the company a pass. I have made the case against Microsoft in this magazine ("Against Microsoft," Feb. 7) and the trial court's findings amply bear out the conclusion that Microsoft has indeed been guilty of monopolization.

Visa/MasterCard, Microsoft, and their various apologists commonly make the argument that the government has not proven consumer harm from the practices attacked as illegal. This reflects a fundamental misunderstanding. Consumer harm is not an element of a Sherman Act offense that must be proved independently of the law violation. Antitrust conclusively *presumes* consumer harm when unlawful behavior is shown. If a plaintiff proves, for example, that defendants have fixed prices, that is enough; there is no need to prove that prices would have been lower but for the agreement. If, in a monopolization case, the defendant is shown to have employed exclusionary tactics that did not create efficiency, consumer harm is also conclusively presumed. In both the Microsoft and Visa/MasterCard cases, it is clear, in any event, that innovation has been stifled and price competition softened or eliminated.

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In both antitrust cases, innovation has been stifled and price competition softened or eliminated.

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Neither is it useful to compare the raw figures for numbers of mergers investigated and turned down, or approved with modifications, from one time period to another. Mergers often come in waves and enforcement activity increases as a result. Nor is it helpful to lump together the activities of the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Federal Communications Commission in an effort to prove something about the cases against Visa/MasterCard and Microsoft. These are very different agencies with differing views. Some are more prone to unjustified activism than others. The Antitrust Division of the Justice Department, while by no means infallible, is, in my opinion, the best of the three.

No one would contend that antitrust enforcers and courts never make mistakes. The history of the policy is replete with economic fiascos, but as better economic analysis has been brought to bear over the past three decades, the law has steadily improved. Mistakes are still made, particularly in private antitrust actions, but mistakes are not the general rule. Contrary to the belief apparently common among conservatives and liberals alike, there is an intellectual structure underlying antitrust. It would be better to understand that structure and evaluate each case individually, instead of relying upon a scandal theory to account for every prosecution. **NR**

MICHAEL CATANZARO RESPONDS:

RATHER than debate Mr. Bork at length about the wisdom of a particular antitrust case, I will concentrate in this response on the thesis of my original article: that antitrust enforcement has become thoroughly politicized under this administration.

Mr. Bork denies that American Express and Microsoft's competitors were the motivating forces behind the government's antitrust cases. In 1998, Mr. Bork told the *Washington Post* that he "thought in the past [antitrust enforcement] was overdone and politicized." Therefore, what he is asking us to believe is that the antitrust process has somehow become *less* politicized under the Clinton-Gore administration than it had been in Republican administrations. While not logically impossible, this proposition is—at the very least—counterintuitive, for anyone who has been following and reporting on the politicization of the executive branch in general in the Clinton years.

Now to specifics. It is entirely legitimate to ask why American Express, as part of its corporate battle plan, included pursuing an antitrust case against Visa and MasterCard. And, further, if the case was being investigated on the merits, why did Mr. Bork have to lobby the Justice Department on behalf of American Express? And how does he account for ProComp, an industry conglomerate opposed to Microsoft, which sought to—and did—in its own words, "encourage [the Justice Department] to proceed promptly with its longstanding investigation concerning Microsoft"?

Mr. Bork says this lobbying effort was entirely appropriate, because, well, the other side did it too. Microsoft and Visa/MasterCard, he writes, tried to convince government officials that the antitrust suits against them were unwarranted. But what company *wouldn't* do so, when facing the prospect of a costly, protracted, and potentially devastating antitrust suit?

With regard to Vernon Jordan, Mr.

Mr. Catanzaro is a reporter for syndicated columnist Robert D. Novak.

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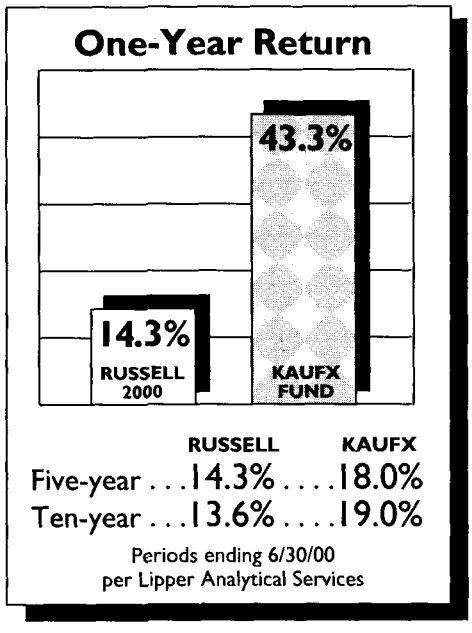

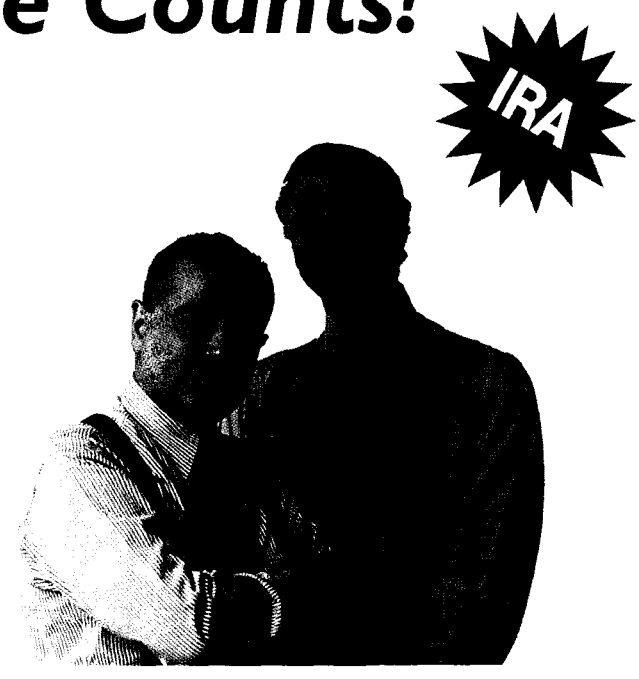

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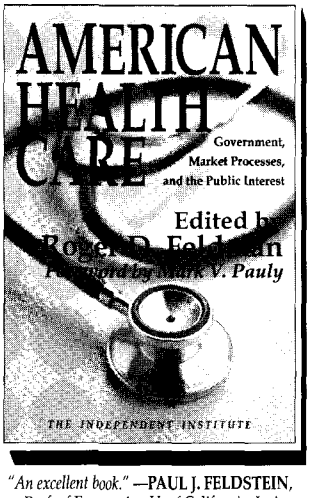
Government vs. Health?



American Health Care examines why harmful consequences follow when government directs health care through planning and regulating medical practices, qualifications, goods, services, and prices. The book demonstrates, for example, how hospital-rate regulation raises hospital prices, that "no-fault" medical malpractice increases faulty medicine, and that FDA regulation is a major cause for the escalating cost and delays for new drugs. The book further traces the special-interest genesis of Medicare and examines the consumer advantages of medical savings accounts.

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Bork writes that the committee of which Jordan was a member, the International Competitiveness Advisory Committee, "did not even advise about specific antitrust cases." But I did not suggest that Jordan himself drove the case, but merely that his proximity to Klein in this capacity was a bit unseemly—considering that Jordan was a board member of a corporation that was lobbying Klein to prosecute another corporation.

■

It's hard to see harm in the fact that Visa/MasterCard offers consumers a choice among 20,000 different credit cards.

■

Mr. Bork wrongly accuses me of lumping together "the activities of the Justice Department, the Federal Trade Commission, and the Federal Communications Commission in an effort to prove something about the cases against Visa/MasterCard and Microsoft." I did nothing of the kind. I was merely calling attention—as an entirely separate point—to the Clinton administration's deliberate effort to erect extensive regulatory obstacles disguised as antitrust enforcement.

Just a final word, on the underlying antitrust issues. Mr. Bork asserts that the Visa/MasterCard network is "harmful to rivals," particularly American Express, with "anticonsumer results." But American Express, over the last two quarters, has had record profits; and it has consistently met its annual goal of 12 to 15 percent earnings growth and 8 percent revenue growth. It's truly hard to see any harm to consumers in the fact that Visa/MasterCard offers them a choice among 20,000 different credit cards, including deals on, among other things, gas, groceries, and air travel—a situation that seems also to rebut Mr. Bork's unsupported assertion that, in the Visa/MasterCard case, "innovation has been stifled and price competition softened or eliminated." **NR**

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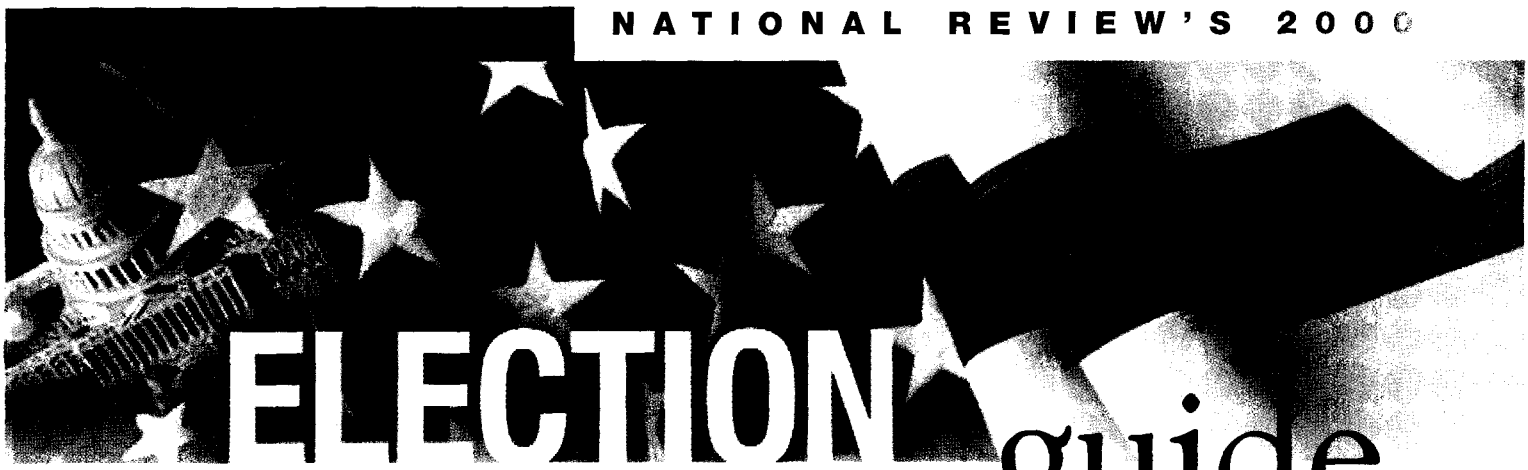

ELECTION guide

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THE RACE

The Un-Clinton

Gore is not Clinton—that's the problem

STEPHEN MOORE

THROUGHOUT the 1980s the Democratic party's collective political judgment was blinded by a visceral hatred of Ronald Reagan. Left-wing pundits couldn't fathom the affection of the American public for Reagan, nor, worse still, its agreement with his right-leaning ideas on the military, the economy, and moral values. In 1988, Michael Dukakis's biggest blunder was his insistence on running against Reagan, not George Bush. The Democrats bemoaned the policy failures of "the last eight years," and warned voters that Bush would deliver more of the same. Voters replied: That's good, because that's exactly what we want. In short, the Democrats made the 1988 election a referendum on Reaganomics. Bush carried 40 states.

It wasn't until the public learned that Bush was not, in fact, "just like Reagan" that they rebelled against the GOP, and that the party's "electoral lock" on the White House vanished. In 1992, Bill Clinton was smart: He ran not against the ghost of Reagan, but against the defective policies of Bush. And he won by promising to recreate the prosperity that Bush's mismanagement of the economy had let slip away.

The Bush campaign strategy of tying Bill Clinton's scandals and sexual escapades around Al Gore's neck isn't just ineffective; it's completely counterproductive.

Could it be that Republicans have now tripped into the same political ditch? It's no secret that Republican party loyalists have a deep-rooted antipathy toward Bill Clinton. For eight years now, this contempt for the man they call "Slick Willie" has short-circuited their political acuity. If Ronald Reagan was the most underestimated politician of the past half-century, surely by now we can all agree that Bill Clinton is, at least, a close second.

The Bush campaign strategy of tying Bill Clinton's scandals and sexual escapades around Al Gore's neck isn't just ineffective; it's completely counterproductive. There are, no doubt, some similarities between Clinton and his vice president: Both have the same tendency to view truth-telling as optional. But the American public simply doesn't believe that Al Gore is the kind of sexual preda-

Mr. Moore is president of the Club for Growth.

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tor that Bill Clinton is; and, thankfully, they are right.

Voters still have a very negative attitude toward Clinton's vile personal behavior in the Oval Office, but they're hardly in revolt over his performance when it comes to matters of state. That's not too surprising, because Clinton's overall economic record is more favorable than many Republicans and conservatives wish to concede.

Tying Gore to Clinton simply makes Gore seem reasonable on policy, and a decent enough standard-bearer for prosperity. He's nothing of the sort.

Bill Clinton did not, of course, *cause* this magnificent expansion. But when someone is raking in a huge pot at the poker table, you don't lecture him about how he played the hand all wrong. Voters don't care all that much about who deserves the credit; what they know for certain is that this truly is a marvelous economy—and, more than anything else, they want more of the same.

That's entirely rational. If we were to rank presidents on the basis of their success in generating prosperity, jobs, and income growth, Bill Clinton gets a surprisingly strong report card. Let's take a look at how past presidents have fared, using an objective economic index constructed by Harvard University and Hoover Institution economist Robert J. Barro. Barro measured the change in four key economic indicators over the last 13 four-year presidential terms: the inflation rate, the unemployment rate, the GDP growth rate, and interest rates.

Conservatives will be cheered to learn that Reagan's first term ranks first on the Barro index. But—and this is likely to hit Republicans right in the solar plexus—Clinton's second term ranks a strong second, blowing away Bush, Ford, and Nixon. Barro explains Clinton's high standing by noting: "When it came to growth, [Clinton's] good policies—such as free trade, welfare reform, spending restraint, and stable monetary policy—outweighed his bad policies [such as] the income-tax rate hike, minimum-wage increase, family-leave regulation, and overzealous antitrust enforcement." NR economist Lawrence Kudlow has made exactly the same point over the past four years. In some ways, Clinton's success is the ultimate validation of the Reagan supply-side model.

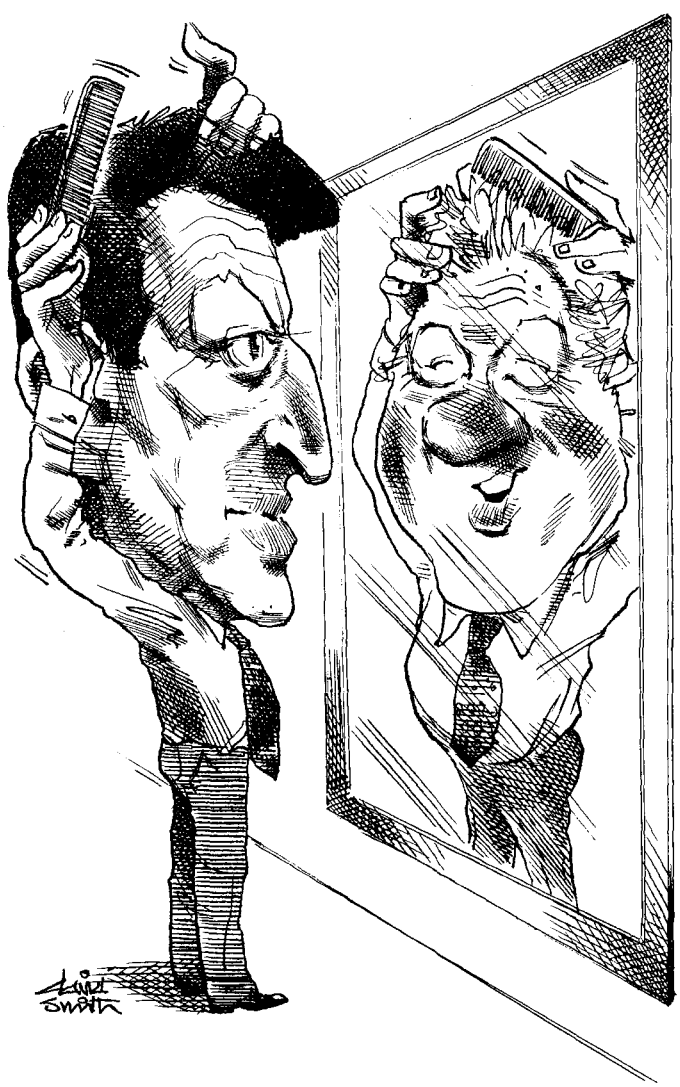
Barro's index underscores the folly of the GOP strategy of running against Clinton in this year's election. The key to winning for George W. Bush is to separate Gore's policies from those of Clinton: Gore is simply more liberal, across the board. Clinton is genuinely a New Democrat; Gore is not. Gore is economically risky. He is reflexively pro-government in ways that Clinton is not. Gore is much more reminiscent in philosophy of the European socialist leaders of the 1980s—François Mitterrand, for example—than of the reformist New Democrat movement built by Clinton.

It's a worthwhile exercise to step back a minute and contrast Bill Clinton's policy successes with Al Gore's shifty campaign positions. First, free trade: Gore says that he wants a union-dictated, environmentalist "fair trade" policy; nowhere does he trumpet free trade. "Fair trade," of course, is a code word for protectionism.

Second, welfare reform: Gore's nanny-state proposals for free health care, child care, preschool, etc., would resurrect the old morally decrepit welfare state under a different name. His goal is much the same as that of the Great Society: to place the state in the role of surrogate father/breadwinner. We have 30 years of evidence that that's a prescription for social and economic disaster.

Third, spending restraint: Gore has proposed *about $1.6 trillion* in new spending over the next decade. That's more money than Mondale, McGovern, and Dukakis proposed—not individually, but combined. Message: Gore's a big spender, par excellence.

Fourth, Clinton has cozied up to business interests, and has fixated on the financial markets as a performance gauge. Gore, in contrast, is campaigning as a demonizer of "big business," regularly attacking



By David Smith

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industries he disagrees with: oil companies, HMOs, drug companies, Microsoft, and big tobacco.

On economics, Gore is a "Clinton Democrat" only when it comes to perpetuating Clinton's debilitating economic policies. He wants a higher minimum wage; he's against pro-growth tax cuts, and supported Clinton's veto of the repeal of the death tax; he wants *paid* family leave; and he wants to hike the budget for the Justice Department trustbusters. He recently told the *Washington Post* that he relishes the opportunity to run as a progressive, trust-busting, anti-corporate crusader. On environmental policy, Clinton has been friendly to the radical greens; Gore would paint the Oval Office green. The Kyoto global-warming treaty alone ought to give Americans pause about a Gore presidency.

The Bush campaign has to start pounding Gore-Lieberman mercilessly for lurching the Democratic party back to the loony left. Tying Gore to Clinton simply makes Gore seem reasonable on policy, and a decent enough standard-bearer for prosperity. He's nothing of the sort. He could very easily be to Clinton what Herbert Hoover was to Calvin Coolidge.

Bush should debate Gore dozens of times before the election. Each time Gore opens his mouth on national TV, he utters some new scheme to boost government spending and undermine individual liberties. That's an act that wears thin, over time, to an American public that still prefers a paycheck to a welfare check.

I'm a fan of Dick Cheney, but he said something at the Republican convention that encapsulates why the GOP ticket has lost 15 points in the polls in the last four weeks. He said: "Does anyone . . . seriously believe that under Mr. Gore, the next four years would be any different from the last eight [under Clinton]?" If Americans conclude on Election Day that Gore would govern just like Clinton, the election is lost—for the Republicans. The message of the Barro index is that the only way for Bush-Cheney to win is to convince voters that four years of Al Gore would be nothing at all like the last eight. **NR**

PUBLIC POLICY

Tax (Credit) & Spend

Liberalism's latest social engineering

LAWRENCE KUDLOW

As the presidential campaign takes on a more ideological cast, it's the argument over tax cuts that most dramatically captures the different visions of government of the two candidates.

George W. Bush's tax-cut plan would shift a substantial amount of economic power from the federal government back to individuals. Bush aims to limit federal tax revenues to no more than one-third of the income people earn, and there's a strong moral dimension to this economic principle: Bush believes that self-governing individuals—as they exercise their personal responsibilities to each other, their families, their businesses, and their communities—will be a more reliable engine of prosperity than any number of Washington bureaucrats and regulators.

Bush's one-third rule on taxes holds the key to understanding who the Texan really is, and how he would govern if elected president. The contrast with Al Gore couldn't be more striking. Gore's tax plan contains no fewer than 29 targeted tax credits, each with specific government-approved behavioral requirements and means-tested income thresholds for eligibility. This is not a tax-relief package; it's an IRS-administered monopoly of government entitlements, transfers, grants, and subsidies, adding needless complexities to the confusing system of pulleys and levers in the existing tax code.

Together with the harsh regulations he has threatened to impose on unfavored businesses, Gore's tax-credit avalanche would drastically enlarge the government's role in the economy. He told the Democratic convention that only "over my dead body" will there be across-the-board tax-rate reduction. In Gore's view, the free-enterprise sector has gotten out of government's control,

Mr. Kudlow is an NR contributing editor.

THE LIEBERFLOPS

Social Security

Lieberman supports "privatization"—

"A remarkable wave of innovative thinking is advancing the concept of privatization, some personalization of retirement plans. . . . I think in the end that individual control of part of the retirement/Social Security funds has got to happen." (*San Diego Union Tribune*, April 19, 1998)

Lieberman opposes "privatization"—

"And look at what Governor Bush is proposing. Instead of saving Social Security, he's on a course to savage it with a privatization scheme that would take $1 trillion out of the nest egg that belongs to every worker in America, and jeopardize the program stability and the security of the working future of the American people." (Remarks at Connecticut AFL-CIO convention, Aug. 7, 2000)

"There's a case where the Bush campaign has taken some comments a couple years ago and made them into holy writ. It is not true. I was intrigued by the idea of privatization [*sic*] part of Social Security." (*Larry King Live*, Aug. 8, 2000)

"In June, the Gore campaign prudently asked Lieberman to prepare an 'op-ed column' on Social Security. 'My Private Journey Away from Privatization' attacked 'an expensive experiment' and endorsed Gore's plan. It appeared in no newspapers, but was filed at Gore headquarters for future distribution—which came this week." (Robert Novak, "Moderate Talk, but a Distinctly Liberal Walk," *Chicago Sun-Times*, Aug. 10, 2000)

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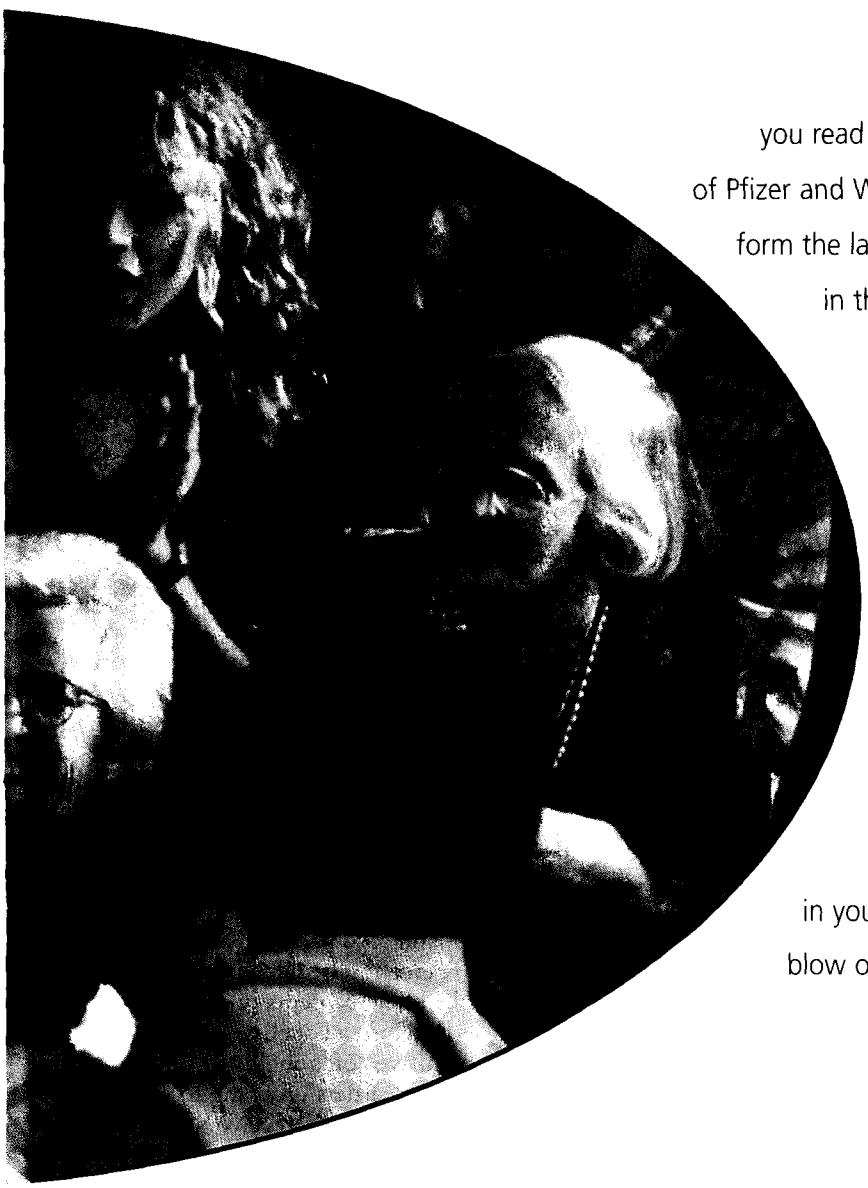

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and his almost $3 trillion in new spending and targeted tax credits will inject a strong dose of federal guidance to curb its power.

The upshot of Gore's plan, however, will be to curb economic growth. Personal tax payments are now rising more than twice as fast as income, forcing middle-income earners into higher tax brackets that erode their purchasing power and weaken their incentives to work and invest. Gore's plan proposes nothing to offset this effect.

term health care, and health services for disabled workers. This tax hike comes on top of the 28 percent tax rate (for those earning $45,000), the Social Security-Medicare payroll tax, and assorted state and local taxes. A successful worker claiming one or more of Gore's credits could find herself with a combined tax rate well over 50 percent. This is not exactly "tax fairness."

Possibly the worst tax-rate spike involves Gore's retirement savings plan. A married couple earning $30,000 is eligible for a three-to-one matching grant if they save $500. However, should the breadwinner get a salary hike of one extra dollar, then the three-to-one match turns into a one-to-one match—*causing a $1,000 income loss for that family.*

Bush's plan is not perfect. But the bottom line remains that Bush's broad-based tax-cut plan would expand the economic pie. It would help everyone and hurt no one.

One major problem with Gore's tax credits is that taxpayers are punished—by losing their tax benefit—when their income rises above the threshold that qualifies them for the credit. Research by the American Enterprise Institute shows that this penalty—effectively, a tax hike for earning more money—will threaten those taxpayers who receive Gore's tax credits for education, after-school care, day care, long-

WEFA, a highly regarded Philadelphia economic-forecasting company, has studied the Gore and Bush tax plans and concluded that Bush's would promote slightly more economic growth and lower unemployment. According to Michael Donnelly, WEFA senior economist and the study's author, "Gore's tax proposal is more of a spending plan. The tax plan is a vehicle for social change based on Gore's behavioral norms."

Under Bush's plan, by contrast, all taxpayers would get relief, with those at the low end of the income scale actually receiving proportionately larger reductions. If one includes Bush's proposal to give a couple of percentage points of payroll taxes back to workers for private investment accounts, then the benefits for low-income earners—especially for the roughly 30 million people who work but pay no income taxes—are even greater. According to Bush adviser John Cogan, 6 million two-parent, two-children families earning less than $35,000 a year would have no income tax liability. What's more, by dropping the current 15 percent rate to 10 percent, and doubling the family allowance, the Bush plan would substantially reduce the penalty now faced by low-income earners whose successful work effort moves them up the ladder, but causes them to lose the refundable earned-income tax credit. This is what Bush means when he talks of lowering the toll-gate for entry into the middle class.

But at the heart of the Bush proposal is the increase in economic benefits—and tax revenues—from lower tax rates. He intends to replace the current system, which has tax rates of 15, 28, 31, 36, and 39.6 percent, with a 10-15-25-33 percent schedule. Top earners would take home 67 cents on the extra dollar earned instead of 60 cents: an increased incentive of roughly 11.5 percent. Middle earners dropping to 15 percent from 28 percent receive an 18 percent incentive increase. As supply-side founding father Arthur Laffer taught us many years ago, it must pay to work, produce, and invest. When it pays more, the economy grows and tax revenues rise.

Over the past five years, the U.S. economy has grown at a 4 percent annual rate. Assuming that Bush's tax cuts generate an aggregate 12 percent increase in after-tax rewards, then the future economy would grow at a 4.5 per-

THE LIEBERFLOPS

Affirmative Action

Lieberman opposes "group preferences"—

"You can't defend policies that are based on group preferences as opposed to individual opportunities, which is what America has always been about." (*San Francisco Examiner*, March 10, 1995)

Lieberman calls "group preferences" un-American—

"This business of deciding by group . . . that's an un-American argument. And it's an un-American argument because it's based on averages, not individuals. And that's the same when we come to group preferences and quotas. America's about individuals, not averages or groups." (*New York Times*, March 10, 1995)

Lieberman retreats from opposition to "group preferences"—

Q: **"The vice president said you have shared values but, of course, you have differed with regard to certain significant issues. For instance, affirmative action, you have opposed it in the past . . ."**

Lieberman: **"Some of those topics you mentioned, like affirmative action, we're together on . . ."**

Gore: **"Ironically, you mentioned two things we actually agree strongly on. We both support affirmative action . . ." (ABC's *Good Morning America*, Aug. 9, 2000)**

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cent yearly rate. The economy would double in 16 years, with a near doubling in the level of productivity. As revenues from more payrolls fill the Social Security coffers, the greater availability of goods and services will absorb the money supply and actually reduce inflation and interest rates. (This is exactly what happened during the Reagan years, though most economists still refuse to admit it.)

By 2020, Bush's plan would produce $400 billion in extra tax revenues (using a 20 percent average tax rate). But if Gore's spend-and-regulate policies were put in place, the old 4 percent yearly growth baseline could slip to 3.5 percent—with the result that, by 2020, revenues would be *$800 billion* less than those generated by the Bush program.

Bush's plan is not perfect. His roughly $800 billion in new spending proposals may be only a third of Gore's total, but it is still too much. The governor also proposes several new tax credits for education and health care, but these would be unnecessary if the top tax rate were lowered to 25 percent. Eliminating the estate tax, as Bush proposes, is a pro-growth measure, but it would have been improved by the addition of a lower capital-gains tax. He also should have included faster write-offs to lower the cost of new business equipment; this would help generate greater energy output, and ease the adaptation of old-economy industries to the age of the Internet.

But the bottom line remains that Bush's broad-based tax-cut plan would expand the economic pie. It would help everyone and hurt no one. It would advance economic freedom and restrain government planning. "My plan is one that gives people options, not orders," Bush told a recent audience in Chicago.

Fundamentally, Bush believes that the men and women on Main Street—not the government—are the true source of power; their responsibilities must not be usurped by government, lest the community be weakened both socially and economically. This moral vision of how a prosperous society should function would be the guiding force for the policymaking of a George W. Bush administration. **NR**

TRENDS

Lost Cause

Why southern Democrats won't rise again

JOHN HOOD

Raleigh, N.C.

In 1998, Republicans lost several high-profile races in the South. The national media pounced, suggesting that the defeat of South Carolina Gov. David Beasley and Alabama Gov. Fob James, among others, meant that Democrats had finally turned the corner in Dixie: They had reestablished their competitiveness on such issues as state lotteries and education, and won back many Southern whites who had defected to the GOP.

The Democrats' resurgence in the South was due largely to a high turnout among black voters and disaffection among conservatives.

In reality, however, the Democrats' resurgence was due largely to a high turnout among black voters and disaffection among conservatives, such as South Carolinians upset with Beasley over the issue of the Confederate battle flag. But the punditocracy continues to forecast the demise of the southern GOP. Most recently, the *New York Times* claims to have spotted a new trend: southern Republicans switching parties to become Democrats. In June, reporter David Firestone breathlessly told the story of one Randy J. Sauder, a Republican state legislator in the Atlanta suburbs who recently became a Democrat in order, he said, to please his growing constituency of transplants from the North and Midwest.

Reporters love a story like this, because it advances a counterintuitive theme. But Sauder's switch says nothing about party politics in the South; it is newsworthy precisely because it is rare. Hundreds of prominent Democratic officeholders in the South joined the GOP during the 1990s, and continue to do so routinely; the trend is so unmistakable that it rarely gets noticed anymore. But there is an important larger story here.

Two-party politics is a relatively new development in the South. Before the 1990s, the last period of genuine partisan competition was the 1890s, when an unwieldy coalition of traditional Republicans, blacks, farmers, and nativists challenged the Democratic establishment and, in some states, took control of legislatures and governor's mansions. It didn't last long. Democrats recovered quickly, using the race issue: specifically, segregation. By 1900, Republicans returned to the sidelines, and their populist allies disappeared into the new Democratic coalition.

Some southerners remained Republican: Residents of mountain counties in Virginia, western North Carolina, eastern Tennessee, and northwestern Arkansas had joined the party during the Civil War as an act of contempt for the Democratic elites that favored secession. They provided most of the leaders of the southern GOP into the 1960s. In addition, until the 1930s most southern blacks were Republican, and many continued to be until the 1960s.

Traditional Republicans in the South weren't so much conservative as establishmentarian: They were deal-makers and logrollers. The party was transformed, and moved rightward, during the 1960s and 1970s as southern Democrats fed up with the radicalization of their party began to desert. Jesse Helms

Mr. Hood is president of the John Locke Foundation, a state-policy think tank, and a syndicated columnist and television commentator in North Carolina.

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was elected to the U.S. Senate from North Carolina in 1972—the same year the Nixon tide helped elect the state's first GOP governor in the 20th century. Breakthroughs similar to Helms's occurred elsewhere in the South.

During the 1970s and 1980s, two more kinds of southern Republicans emerged, both immigrating from frostier climes. The new suburban Republicans had moved south to Atlanta, Greenville, Charlotte, and other cities to take jobs in emerging industries such as computers, telecommunications, and finance. Most had grown up Republican in places like New Jersey, Ohio, and Michigan. They quickly became active in local Republican-party organizations, and they now exercise a dominant role in the leadership. One can meet GOP chairmen in every urban county in North Carolina without ever hearing the word "y'all."

These transplanted suburbanites don't share the old "Jessecrat" combination of social conservatism and fiery rhetoric. They aren't used to being on the political margin; where they came from, Republicans weren't just the butt of jokes—they were mayors and congressmen. These "New South" Republicans are more comfortable wielding power, and speak in tones more congenial to the ears of "soccer moms"; but they are more conservative than southern GOP leaders of the past.

Another key group is the retirees. It is impossible to overstate their importance in southern Republican coalitions. They have both the time and the money to be politically active. In coastal regions, and in growing metropolitan areas where they move to be close to medical and other amenities, these refugees from winter are becoming a solid vote against wasteful spending and tax hikes.

Contrary to what the national media suggest, the growing Republicanism of the South—weaving together the mountain moderates, rural party-switchers, suburban transplants, and thrifty retirees—has produced exactly what one might have predicted: Where school bonds once passed twice as often as they failed, now the ratio is edging closer to 50–50. During the 1970s and 1980s, spending per pupil for public schools skyrocketed. During the 1990s, with Republicans as major players in southern legislatures and controlling some counties, education spending has grown less rapidly, and in some cases not much at all. States like North Carolina, which hadn't seen a tax cut in living memory, started easing the tax burden due to Republican influence.

Of course, you can't run a Jesse Helms-style campaign if you seek election to state or local government. Nor can Republicans hope to prevail in tight races if they appear not to care about the quality of core public services such as education and highways. These propositions are true not just in the South, but everywhere; and Republicans who are able to present themselves as reasonable, competent problem-solvers are doing well in most southern jurisdictions. In North Carolina, a shocking four of the state's five largest cities have Republican mayors, some of whom have been able to cut taxes, privatize some services, and redirect resources to public safety and other priorities important to conservatives. Traditional Democratic power brokers are flummoxed by these developments.

Republicans do face some serious challenges in the region. When you exclude Florida (which, geography notwithstanding, is not a "southern" state) and Virginia (a case somewhat similar to Florida), GOP gains in the early 1990s have faded a bit: In the past two years, Republican governors in South Carolina, Alabama, and Mississippi have been replaced by Democrats. The governors of Tennessee, Arkansas, and Louisiana are Republican, but their legislatures remain firmly Democratic. The GOP's share of southern legislative seats, while up dramatically from the 10-to-20 percent rates that prevailed until the 1980s, remains mired at 40 percent (outside the South, Republicans enjoy a slim majority).

Still, the prognosis for southern Republicans remains good. The party is much stronger than it was in, say, 1984—when Reagan won big in the South, but Republicans got only 42 percent of the vote in southern House and Senate contests. In 1998, the year of the so-called Gingrich meltdown, GOP candidates won 54 percent. Furthermore, the party is building a farm team of local officeholders who may one day move on to legislative or congressional races. A better-than-average showing in the South this fall by semi-southerner George W. Bush—whose poll numbers in Dixie have already reversed themselves from the slide of early September—might well leave several legislative chambers in GOP hands for the post-2000 redistricting, creating a new political landscape for future races.

The national media will continue their search for exceptions, but the overall trend remains unaltered: Prominent southern Democrats are continuing to switch their allegiances, and sometimes their party registrations, to the GOP. In North Carolina, business executives with lifelong Democratic ties, even former Clinton supporters, are giving Bush money and chairing his fundraisers. This isn't news, but it's the truth. **NR**

The national media will continue their search for exceptions, but the overall trend remains unaltered: Prominent southern Democrats are continuing to switch their allegiances.

THE LIEBERFLOPS

Tort Reform & Trial Lawyers

Lieberman supports tort reform—**"I've supported just about every tort-reform proposal that's come along the track in my eleven years here." (Press conference, July 15, 1999)**

Now: **We're waiting . . .**

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SS

The Bankrupt Estate

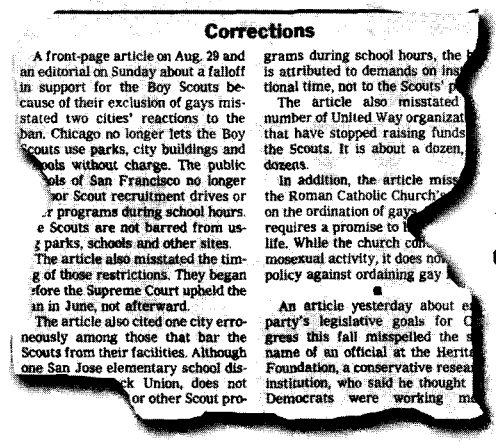
Bias at the *Times*, and everywhere else

JONAH GOLDBERG

THE only people who still deny that the media lean to the left are media people who lean even further to the left than the media in general. Even 70 percent of self-described liberals think the media are biased. If not for the journalists who keep swearing it's not true—Dan Rather says bias is "one of the great political myths"—most conservatives would probably leave this topic alone. But in presidential campaigns, which are always covered like horse races, to ignore bias is as foolish as not paying attention to the condition of a racetrack. Some horses run well on a muddy track, others don't. And in America, Democrats always run better in media mud than Republicans.

Political reporters have a built-in bias. Like conventional liberals, they usually measure progress in terms of "bold action" at the federal level, as well as anything that increases the importance of their beat, i.e., Washington. Since Republicans tend to run against Washington, they are perceived as the permanent opposition party, the "others" whose motives are always a little suspect. Journalism tends to reduce political conflicts to good guys and bad guys; 89 percent of journalists voted for Bill Clinton in 1992, and 90 percent in 1996, so it's understandable that Republicans get stuck with the villain role. This translates into a permanent headwind, against which Republicans must struggle constantly to prove that their motives are honest and benevolent.

The 2000 election provides some good examples. When confessed rapist and convicted murderer Gary Graham was up for execution in Texas this summer, the major news networks ran 30 stories suggesting that Bush might be killing an innocent man. The cable channels turned into full-time death-row vigils. Jesse Jackson was omnipresent, comparing Bush to Pontius Pilate and praising Graham as a martyr. Morning news shows lamented Bush's decision to go ahead with the execution—despite the inconvenient fact that the Texas governor lacked the authority to halt the execution.



Corrections

A front-page article on Aug. 29 and an editorial on Sunday about a falloff in support for the Boy Scouts because of their exclusion of gays misstated two cities' reactions to the ban. Chicago no longer lets the Boy Scouts use parks, city buildings and schools without charge. The public ...ols of San Francisco no longer ...or Scout recruitment drives or ...r programs during school hours. ...e Scouts are not barred from us... ...g parks, schools and other sites. The article also misstated the tim... ...g of those restrictions. They began ...fore the Supreme Court upheld the ...an in June, not afterward. The article also cited one city erroneously among those that bar the Scouts from their facilities. Although one San Jose elementary school dis... ...k Union, does not ... or other Scout pro... grams during school hours, the ... is attributed to demands on ins... tional time, not to the Scouts' p... The article also misstated ... number of United Way organizat... that have stopped raising funds ... the Scouts. It is about a dozen, ... dozens. In addition, the article miss... the Roman Catholic Church's ... on the ordination of gays ... requires a promise to ... life. While the church con... mosexual activity, it does no... policy against ordaining gay ... An article yesterday about e... party's legislative goals for C... gress this fall misspelled the s... name of an official at the Herit... Foundation, a conservative resea... institution, who said he thought ... Democrats were working ma...

Now recall how, in 1992, just days before the New Hampshire presidential primary, another southern governor confronted a similar situation. Ricky Ray Rector faced the death penalty in Arkansas, and Gov. Bill Clinton dropped everything to fly home and personally authorize the execution, proving he was no squishy Dukakis liberal. Rector was, to be sure, just as guilty as Graham; but he was also mentally incompetent, which surely would have vexed the press if Clinton had been a Republican. (Rector was actually so brain-damaged that he asked the guards to save his pecan pie for when he got back from the electric chair.)

There were a total of *two* network-news stories on the Rector case, one before and one after the execution. A few newspapers ran brief stories, but they were generally matter-of-fact and buried on inside pages. The overall coverage was generally favorable, highlighting how Clinton was a "different kind of Democrat."

Consider another telling contrast: In 1992, President Bush visited a grocers convention in Florida. He was shown a new kind of checkout scanner that could read torn labels on supermarket items. The president reacted politely, as if he were wowed by the contraption. Even though the *New York Times* did not cover

Mr. Goldberg is editor of National Review Online (www.nationalreview.com).

THE LIEBERFLOPS

School Choice

Lieberman supports school choice—
"There are some who dismiss suggestions of school-choice programs and charter schools out of hand, direly predicting that these approaches will 'ruin' the public schools. The undeniable reality here is that this system is already in ruins, and to blindly reject new models and refuse to try new ideas is simply foolish." (Statement before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, April 17, 1997)

Lieberman retreats from school choice—
"Mr. Lieberman has for several years been a strong supporter of school-choice vouchers to help inner-city students escape from failing public schools . . . Now, however, he is telling Democrats that he no longer supports [this] idea." (Donald Lambro, "Senator Makes Move Away from Bush-Like Positions," *Washington Times*, Aug. 9, 2000)

"For Senator Lieberman to change his mind now looks like the same kind of expediency shown by Bill Bradley when he abandoned school choice in the Democratic primaries." (Orthodox Jewish rabbi quoted in "Say It Ain't So, Joe," *Wall Street Journal*, Aug. 10, 2000)

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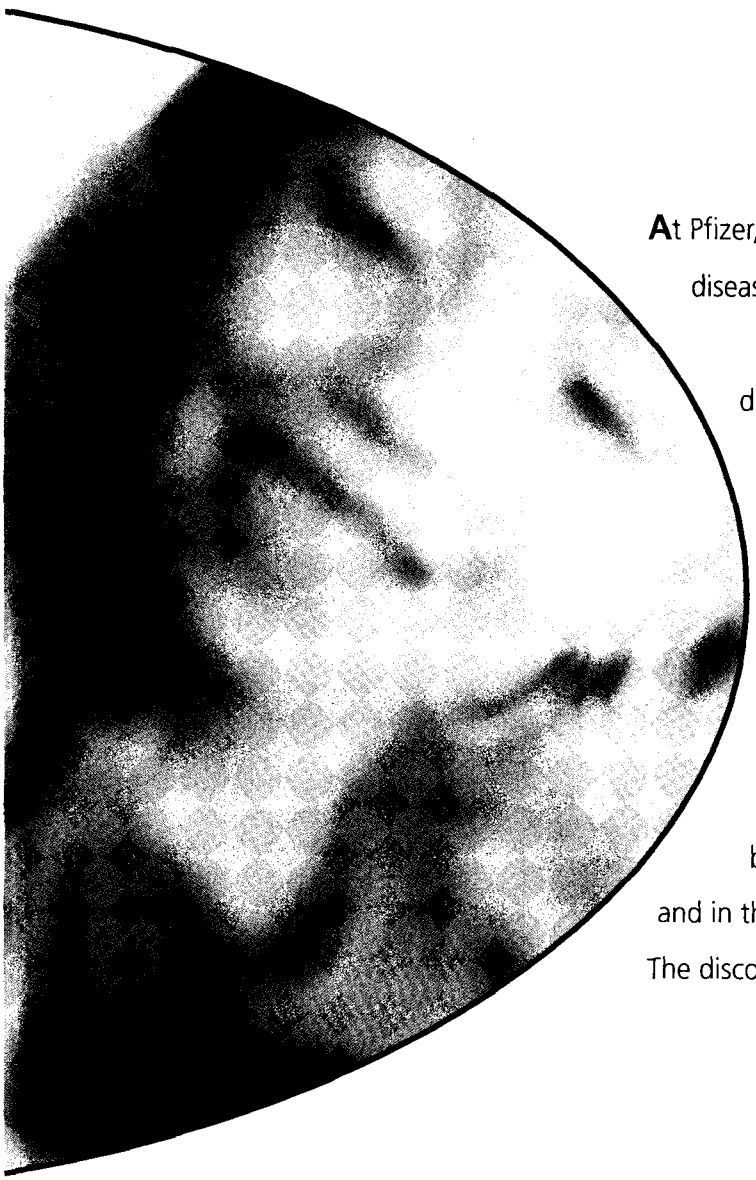
THE NEW PFIZER



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the event, they used the pool story and photo of a "amazed" Bush on the front page—and made it seem as if the Republican president had never seen a normal scanner before. For an incumbent during a recession, the story was devastating. It sent a clear message: Bush was an aristocrat, out of touch with real Americans. The media loved it, and so did a grateful Clinton-Gore camp. "Here is a man who sees 20-year-old technology at the supermarket checkout line and looks like an ape discovering fire," railed Gore.

This June, though, it was revealed that Al Gore was a slumlord, and the media response was dramatically different. An impoverished family of lifelong Democrats named Mayberry rented a hovel on Gore's property, 150 yards away from his own Carthage, Tenn., home, and they credibly charged that they were treated terribly by their absentee landlord. This was far more relevant than the fabricated scanner story, and yet it was almost entirely ignored by the national press. If George W. Bush had a family living on disability on his Texas ranch with similar complaints, the election would be as good as over.

Democrats are given the benefit of the doubt; Republicans aren't. For months, Dick Cheney has been forced to answer questions about his stake in the oil-exploration firm Halliburton (whose work, in fact, makes oil cheaper); meanwhile, the Gore family's lifelong indebtedness to Occidental Petroleum is considered a petty nonissue. The criticism that Bush and Cheney are products of "Big Oil" and "Big Tobacco" and the "Gun Lobby" gets a fair hearing in the media, but Gore's longtime practice of selling and growing tobacco is a nonissue, and Joe Lieberman's often zealous defense of the insurance and gun companies is also minimized.

Of course, one could—and should—make the case that the Republicans don't do enough to highlight the Democratic ticket's liabilities; but it is much harder for Republicans to get the media to take the bait. When the *Boston Globe* exposed Al Gore's lie that arthritis medicine for his mother-in-law cost three times as much as the same medicine for his dog, the Bush camp tried to make it an example of Gore's tendency to invent convenient stories. But the *New York Times* served as a firewall, suggesting that Gore told the truth and that the Bush-Cheney team was taking cheap shots.

The Gore campaign, in contrast, needs to dangle only the flimsiest of bait to get the media to bite. Richard Berke, the *New York Times* political reporter, swallowed the now-famous subliminal "RATS" story like a starving shark. By now, everyone knows that the *Times* reported that the Bush campaign included the subliminal word "RATS" in a commercial against Gore. In the early editions of that day's paper, the *Times* treated the story as a major scoop, until it was pointed out to them that the RATS item had been spotted and reported by Tony Snow of Fox News a couple of weeks earlier. The *Times* treatment was wildly overblown—and quite effective at knocking Bush off stride.

It's impossible to address in a limited space all the different ways in which media bias affects the race. The mainstream press essentially decides what the "issues environment" will look like. Bush's effort to make this campaign about "leadership" and "restoring dignity and honor to the White House" flopped in no small part because the press decided that actuarial arguments about drug benefits are a worthier topic for the front page. The *New York Times*, whose influence has less to do with the voters it reaches than with the editors it sways, has long been on a crusade to make gay-rights issues central to presidential elections. In the 1996 campaign, they ran three front-page articles scolding Bob Dole for returning a check from the Log Cabin Republicans. In 2000, they have gotten ahead of both the times and the facts in their coverage of homosexuality and the Boy Scouts.

Ultimately, it's a wonder Republicans ever win at all. **NR**

BRADLEY ON GORE

'A Thousand Promises, A Thousand Attacks'

This year a presidential candidate had the harshest things to say about Al Gore—and the candidate wasn't George W. Bush.

Bill Bradley to Al Gore: **"Well, all I can say is, it's politics as usual. And that's a thousand promises and a thousand attacks. That's what's been your campaign—a thousand promises, a thousand attacks. A promise to every little special-interest group; attack, attack, attack every day. That's been the nature of it." (New Hampshire primary debate, Jan. 26, 2000)**

Bill Bradley on Al Gore: **"I think there is a pattern . . . He's taking different positions now. Trying to deny that you ever were pro-gun or pro-life or pro-tobacco—that doesn't please anybody. Your only hope is that nobody will notice." (Quoted in the *Boston Herald*, Jan. 13, 2000)**

"Bradley laid his groundwork for the event by launching a high-level bombing attack on Al Gore, coming close to invoking the dreaded 'L' word: liar. 'People are fed up with politicians who know the truth but only tell a part of it,' Bradley said. 'After seven years in power, Al Gore has not come close to enacting campaign-finance reform. But that's the way Washington works—and Al Gore has perfected its methods.'" (Quoted in *U.S. News & World Report*, Dec. 27, 1999)

Bill Bradley on Al Gore: **"He talks a lot about education, but he's had seven years to demonstrate his accomplishments." (Associated Press, Feb. 9, 2000)**

Bill Bradley to Al Gore: **"Why should we believe you would tell the truth as president if you don't tell the truth as a candidate?" (New Hampshire primary debate, Jan. 26, 2000)**

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THE ISSUES

Supine Neglect

A defensive Bush is ignoring winning issues

CONVENTIONAL wisdom holds that the issues in the presidential race favor Al Gore, so George W. Bush has to win on personality. In fact, Bush can gain an advantage on several issues in this race, from Social Security to taxes to prescription drugs. But to the extent that the conventional wisdom is right, it's largely because Bush has let the Democrats choose what "the issues" would be. Bush has neglected, or at least underemphasized, a number of issues that could help him.

RACIAL PREFERENCES

Thousands of Americans, on receiving their census forms last spring, questioned the forms' obsession with race. The version sent to most households contained only six queries, two of which asked recipients about the color of their skin. In a country that becomes less racist with each generation—to the point where racism today really can't be described as a major obstacle to black advancement—this seemed improper, even antiquated. A poll by the American Civil Rights Institute found that 77 percent of voters (including 65 percent of blacks) thought the government should quit asking about race. Even when the question was posed in a loaded manner—respondents were told that getting rid of the questions might prevent authorities from identifying some forms of discrimination—58 percent still supported this change (59 percent among blacks).

A census occurs during a presidential election only once every 20 years—and here was a gift-wrapped opportunity for George W. Bush to confront the way Washington deals with race. Americans, it is obvious, are hungry for a new approach. They are ready for a separation of race and state—and would welcome a Republican challenge not only to the census questions, but also to that driving force behind the whole racial-spoils system: preferences.

Support for racial preferences is a major handicap for the Democrats, because it splits their base. Voters in both California and Washington State—neither one a GOP stronghold—have banned preferences over the last four years. In 1996, black voters in California were three times as likely to support the anti-preferences Proposition 209 as they were to support Bob Dole. Even Joe Lieberman endorsed 209. (He has since retreated, telling members of the Congressional Black Caucus in August: "I have supported affirmative action. I do support affirmative action. And I will support affirmative action.")

That's the beauty of a message grounded in the principle of colorblind equal opportunity. If words mean what they say, something like Proposition 209 is impossible to oppose. If the matter were pressed in a presidential campaign, it would immediately throw Democrats on the defensive. Polls consistently show a widespread dislike of racial preferences, and this antipathy crosses demographic lines. A 1996 Public Agenda poll showed that 64 percent of white parents thought majority-black school districts should hire the best teachers available regardless of their race—as did 77 percent of black parents.

Republican political consultants usually tell clients that challenging preferences threatens to mobilize liberal voters—as if the Democrats won't resort to ugly racial politics anyway. This is a party that has blamed the GOP for church burnings. It's time to hit back. —*JJM*

Republican consultants usually tell clients that challenging preferences threatens to mobilize liberal voters—as if the Democrats won't resort to ugly racial politics anyway.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

George W. Bush probably doesn't need to worry about losing Arizona in November, even though a September poll of registered voters by KAET-TV had him trailing Al Gore in the state by 10 points. It was probably a bad sample, loaded with Democratic respondents. That's all the more reason to consider another one of the poll's findings: a 51 point lead (71 percent to 20 percent) for

THE LIEBERFLOPS

Entertainment & Popular Culture

Lieberman leads effort to make the entertainment industry clean up its act—

"This is not an attack on Hollywood. This is an appeal to Hollywood to join us in a broad national effort to reduce the avalanche of messages that our kids receive about violence and sex . . ." (*Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 1999)

"The [Fox] network has not yet worked its way up to a naked live execution, but viewers will see plenty of crass displays of nudity." (AP, Sept. 15, 1999)

"So, we're here again to say in no uncertain terms that it is wrong to profit from messages that poison our culture, and teach our children that killing is cool." (Press conference, Dec. 10, 1996)

Lieberman abandons effort to make entertainment clean up its act—

"Al and I have tremendous respect for the industry." (Remarks at a Hollywood fundraiser, quoted in the *Washington Times*, Sept. 21, 2000)

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Proposition 203, a ballot initiative to eliminate bilingual education. It's modeled on California's Proposition 227, which passed two years ago.

Opposing bilingual education rallies conservatives and attracts liberal support the way few other "culture war" issues do; as direct-mail firms learned years ago, official English and related causes do well because Republicans aren't the only people willing to write checks for them. Joe Lieberman has been a skeptic on bilingual education, too. Even the *New York Times* editorial page has been relentlessly critical of such programs.

Fighting to repeal bilingual education isn't just good politics, it's good policy. Immigrant students in California already have seen their test scores rise after just two years in the new program. A recent study in New York City found that 54 percent of seventh-grade English learners enrolled in immersion courses posted above-average test scores, compared to 40 percent of their peers in bilingual education. The gap was even wider in math: 70 percent for immersion students, to 51 percent for those in bilingual programs.

Nobody can deny that immigrants—and especially their children—need to learn English if they are to flourish in the United States. Making sure the schools teach it to them is a matter of Hispanic empowerment. In fact, if the Republicans don't pick up on this issue soon—the GOP's 1998 nominee for governor of California actually made a commercial against Prop. 227—who's to say the Democrats won't run with it themselves? —*JJM*

THE NEW ECONOMY

Bush has been strangely silent on a cluster of economic issues that would identify him with the New Economy and the new investor class. Taxes on sales made over the Internet, for example, are very unpopular; exit polls in the primaries showed Republicans and Democrats alike opposing them. To appeal to popular sentiment, however, Bush would have to buck his fellow governors, many of whom are eager to tax the Internet. (As economist Alan Reynolds has pointed out in *American Outlook*, they are probably overestimating the revenues they would be able to raise.)

Bush has also failed to capitalize on the most (the only?) promising demographic trend for Republicans: the rise of the new investor class.

The governors' plan is an economic and administrative monstrosity, and unconstitutional to boot. Under it, a company that made a sale over the Internet would have to figure out what the sales tax is in each of its customers' hometowns, collect the tax, and send it to the right place. Bush was right to come out for a moratorium on special taxes on the Internet, but he could outflank Gore—who also endorsed the moratorium—by opposing the governors' plan. He could tell the press he was borrowing a good idea from John McCain, who loudly opposed Internet taxes during the primaries.

Bush has also failed to capitalize on the most (the only?) promising demographic trend for Republicans: the rise of the new investor class. The number of investors has boomed along with the stock market over the past few years. The new investors have a high propensity to vote, and they are increasingly attracted to free-market policies and the GOP. It is these voters who have made it politically possible for Bush to suggest partially replacing Social Security with individual investment.

Bush has proposed eliminating the estate tax, an idea that has become more popular as more Americans have seen the possibility of building substantial portfolios. But Bush could do a lot more. He could, for example, propose universal IRAs in which people could save tax-free for retirement, educational and health expenses, and homeownership. He could also criticize the Clinton-Gore administration's prosecution of Microsoft, and Gore's anti-corporate rhetoric, for hurting the investments of millions of Americans. (Fewer than 20 percent of Americans support breaking up Microsoft.) —*RP*

KYOTO

Bush has also passed up the opportunity to criticize Gore's support for the Kyoto global-warming accords. At a time when Gore is promising to take action to bring gas prices down, Bush could point out that Kyoto would require massive tax increases on energy. Some estimates place the total cost of the treaty at $2,000 per year for a family of four. The Kyoto issue would be a good way of reminding voters of Gore's environmental extremism. In Michigan, where polls currently

THE LIEBERFLOPS

Abortion

Lieberman opposes "unlimited" right to abortion—

"I do not believe the right to abortion is unlimited. That too, I suspect, reflects the values of a majority of our society. I therefore support, for example, the requirement of determining the viability of a fetus before an abortion is performed. I also support a requirement that parents of a minor be notified before an abortion is performed." (Letter to a constituent, 1989)

Lieberman retreats to "unlimited" right to abortion—

"My overall record has been pro-choice . . . Until viability of the fetus, the decision about having an abortion should be between a woman, her doctor, and her own value system, or her God . . . I've always said that I would not support parental consent or notification if there was not an opportunity for the child to go to a judge and make that decision, if something was happening in the family that meant that the family could not fairly . . . be part of that." (NBC's *Today*, Aug. 9, 2000)

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have Bush down several points, Gore's hostility to the internal-combustion engine would have to hurt him. Other voters might be troubled by the loss of sovereignty implicit in Kyoto: The U.S. would be agreeing in advance to be bound by decisions yet to be made by international bodies. The Left doesn't often threaten middle-class interests and values these days. Kyoto does. —*RP*

MILITARY CULTURE

In making his case that the state of military readiness has perilously declined under the current administration, Bush delicately avoids one of its most destructive legacies. Clinton's Pentagon appointees have prioritized social engineering over combat effectiveness to promote a feminist agenda that is incompatible with military culture.

The Clinton administration has been relentlessly following the advice it paid for from a feminist academic who counseled former Army secretary Togo West. Prof. Madeline Morris wants to see an "ungendered vision" replace the "masculinist" elements of military culture. Hundreds of positions in or near previously closed combat units have been opened to women; basic training has been integrated; there is even an effort underway to integrate submarine crews. Because of abundant evidence of increased disciplinary problems among integrated trainees, a bipartisan commission appointed by the administration unanimously recommended a return to single-sex training, but its findings were ignored.

Gender-based recruiting inflates the number of women in uniform, whose attrition rate exceeds that of male recruits. Physical standards have been watered down to accommodate women, a regime of "sensitivity training" has been imposed so boys won't be boys, and a majority of men and women in uniform look across their coed ranks and report that they fear they're not ready for combat.

George Bush and Dick Cheney should pledge that their Pentagon will welcome women to serve in all appropriate positions, but combat effectiveness and the lives of young volunteers will not be jeopardized in the service of egalitarian goals hostile to the military ethos. —*KO'B*

ABORTION

A recent bipartisan Battleground poll suggests a lack of intensity among evangelical voters who support George Bush, and in mid September, the governor was down 11 points among non-Hispanic Catholics. In July, a *Los Angeles Times* poll revealed that about 65 percent of the public didn't know the abortion position of the presidential candidates, and since then voters have doubtless attributed pro-life sentiments (arising from his religious orthodoxy) to Joe Lieberman.

Bush's soft-spokenness on abortion imperils his support among social conservatives. Evidence (which seems never to penetrate GOP strategy sessions) makes clear that there is no "pro-choice" majority in favor of Al Gore's position of unrestricted abortion on demand: The *L.A. Times* poll found 54 percent of the public favoring either the Bush position on abortion or making abortion illegal in all cases. The poll also found evenly divided views on *Roe* v. *Wade*, with 43 percent for and 42 percent against—even before the Supreme Court declared that *Roe* gives abortionists a constitutional right to crush the skull of a partially born infant in order to suck out her brains.

Bush's compassionate conservatism should unfailingly include an expression of concern for the unborn, and his frequently expressed desire to usher in a new era of responsibility should extend to reducing the number of abortions by calling on men to support women confronted with unplanned pregnancies. Bush's condemnation of irresponsible men might cut into his Hooters vote, but grateful women might reduce his gender gap. —*KO'B*

In making his case that the state of military readiness has perilously declined under the current administration, Bush delicately avoids one of its most destructive legacies.

THE CANDIDATES

Cream of the Right

How top conservatives are faring

RAMESH PONNURU & KATE O'BEIRNE

On November 7, conservative political junkies will be up late watching the results come in from dozens of elections. The presidential, of course. Also the New York Senate race. The races for control of the House. But the cheers will be especially loud, or the sighs deep, in a few races where true-blue conservatives have not just a stake, but a candidate, in the race. Some of those races have been covered in NR previously ("The Bosom of Abraham," Sept. 25). Others involve candidates who do not currently hold office (George Allen, running for the Senate in Virginia) or are not yet widely known (such as congressional candidates Phill Kline of Kansas, Mike Ferguson of New Jersey, and Jeff Flake of Arizona). On the bird-in-the-hand principle, here we run through some races where conservative incumbents are looking to hold on to their seats or change jobs.

Sen. **John Ashcroft** of Missouri is embroiled in what may be the most bitter Senate race this year—the Hillary–Lazio contest included. Ashcroft has long been a popular figure in the state, first as a moderate two-term governor and now as a conservative first-term senator. Mel Carnahan, the Democratic challenger, has also served two successful terms as governor, but he has made some missteps. He went too far to the left on partial-birth abortion, vetoing a ban and then having his veto overridden. He defeated an NRA-backed ballot initiative that would have let Missourians carry concealed weapons, but in the process alienated many rural Democrats.

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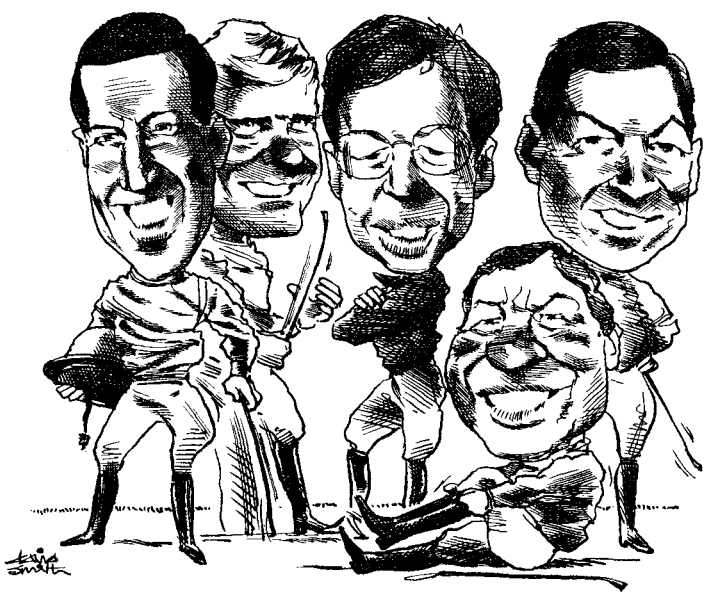
Ashcroft had wanted to run as the religious-conservative candidate for the Republican presidential nomination. But he wisely dropped out in early 1999, and has since emphasized centrist themes while continuing to vote conservative. This one will be tight, but Ashcroft has to be favored to hold on to his seat.

Missouri is also the site of another campaign of interest to conservatives: Rep. **Jim Talent**'s bid for governor. Talent is thoughtful, politic, and principled. He has been a leader on welfare reform. His fellow Republican congressmen generally regard him as one of their smartest colleagues. If he were to stay in Congress, he would be on the very short list for Speaker of the House. If he wins the governor's race, he moves to a different short list: the one for the vice presidency, or higher.

But so far, Talent has run a lackluster campaign. His top issues have been improving public education, cracking down on methamphetamine, and building roads. All of these ideas poll well, but it's hard to see them swaying many voters. Talent's opponent, state treasurer Bob Holden, is a cipher, like Gore in his stiffness and hackery but also in his discipline. If Talent's campaign gets in gear and George W. Bush does well in the state, Talent can win.

When **Rod Grams** joined the Senate in the heady days of 1995, he often said that he was willing to lose reelection if that was the price of doing the right thing. He may be about to pay that price. Grams's standing in the polls has been very low: The number of Minnesotans who think it's time for someone new has been roughly double the number who think he should be reelected. The problem isn't so much that he has compiled such a conservative record (the child tax credit he helped to pass was very popular) as that he has not been identified with locally important issues. The background noise to his campaign—including staff shake-ups and family difficulties—hasn't helped either.

Grams's solace has been a weak Democratic field. The contenders for the Democratic nomination had a long time to squabble: Their primary was on Sept. 12. The winner, Mark Dayton, is the candidate Republicans most wanted to face. They think they can paint Dayton, a former enthusiast for Esalen, as a rich liberal flake. Dayton cannot have helped matters by saying that he would be tending cattle with his second wife, rather than running for the Senate, if she had not divorced him. Even so, Grams is tied (with Bill Roth of Delaware) for most vulnerable Republican in the Senate.



Santorum, McIntosh, Talent, Grams (sitting), and Ashcroft by David Smith

In late 1998, looking toward the 2000 election season, Sen. Robert Torricelli declared: "**Rick Santorum**'s on the top of the [vulnerable] list." The six ambitious Democrats who battled for the opportunity to take on an easy, "too conservative" target shared this opinion. Rep. Ron Klink won the nomination.

But Klink's own pro-life and pro-gun record have cost him the support of liberal Democrats, and Santorum is outfundraising and out-polling him. Santorum's polls show him ahead by about 17 points. The staunchly pro-life, anti-tax senator is touting a successful legislative record, which includes a key role in welfare reform and in aid to Pennsylvania's farmers. Santorum no longer tops the vulnerable list, but his brashness has so irritated some of his Democratic colleagues that he heads the list of the Republicans they would most *like* to defeat; their campaign committee is running $1 million worth of soft-money ads against Santorum, despite having all but written off Klink's chances of unseating him. Back in 1992, as a member of the reformist "Gang of Seven" House freshmen, Santorum was easily reelected, even as President Bush lost his district by a wide margin; this year he is a strong favorite to hold his seat, regardless of Gov. Bush's fate in Pennsylvania.

Indiana congressman **David McIntosh**, a former aide to Vice President Dan Quayle, decided to forfeit the safe congressional seat he's held since 1994—and escape a policy entrepreneur's frustrations with the life of a legislator—by attempting to deny Gov. Frank O'Bannon a second term. McIntosh correctly figured that he'd be helped by Sen. Richard Lugar's reelection race and by Bush's success in his reliably Republican state, but he still faces an uphill battle against a fairly popular incumbent.

The bright and principled McIntosh has been the policy aggressor, and is credited with setting the race's agenda by proposing a 25 percent cut in property taxes. O'Bannon has gained a measure of inoculation on the tax issue by cutting some taxes, and he cheered consumers with his suspensions of the state's gas tax earlier this year. Indiana's healthy economy and this year's incumbent-friendly environment present even the most talented challenger with formidable odds. Still, a recent poll gave both camps some encouragement: McIntosh trailed by 10 points, but O'Bannon was below 50 percent. Democrats are so nervous that a strong GOP year could do in their governor that the party is running ads against Sen. Lugar (who leads his opponent by 50 points) in the hope of holding the state's most popular politician in history below 70 percent. **NR**

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Jerusalem (2)

Should the U.S. Embassy be moved to the capital of Israel?

In a previous clarifying message we showed that before the Six-Day War in 1967, the claim that Jerusalem was a Moslem/Arab city had seldom been asserted and that such claim had come about only in modern times. The status of Jerusalem has now again become of immediate interest, in connection with the ongoing peace process between Israel and the Palestinians and with the effort, supported by 93 senators, to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

What are the facts?

Jerusalem - reunited and indivisible. Ever since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, all American governments and all American Congresses have confirmed their conviction that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and that, once reunited, it should remain indivisible. Before the Six-Day War in 1967, the city was divided, the Jordanians having occupied the eastern part. During their 19-year reign, all Jewish residents were driven out, all Jewish places of worship closed or destroyed, and Jewish cemeteries desecrated. The various Christian denominations, with churches and sacred places in Jerusalem, operated under the strict control of Moslem authorities.

All this ended in 1967 with the liberation of all of Jerusalem by the Israel Defense Forces and with the reunification of the city. Access to the city and to all holy places became available to everybody. The many religious bodies in the holy city (and in all of Israel) are able to pursue their activities without any restrictions. Jerusalem today is truly a free and open city. Just as the whole world rejoiced when the ugly wall dividing Berlin was torn down, so do we rejoice that the wall, the barbed wire and the machine gun emplacements were finally torn down in Jerusalem.

U.S. Embassy not in Israel's capital. While the Palestinians lay claim to the eastern part of Jerusalem and wish it to become the capital of a hoped-for Palestinian state, nobody--not even the Arabs themselves--question the western part of the city to be Israeli. It is remarkable therefore that, despite this universal recognition, the United States has steadfastly insisted on placing and keeping its embassy in Tel Aviv, the major commercial city, instead of in Jerusalem--Israel's capital--the seat of the Knesset(parliament), the Supreme Court, and of all government offices. It is as if a government accredited to the United States were to insist on keeping its embassy in, say, New York, rather than in Washington, D.C.

With the U.S. in the lead, all other countries, with the sole exceptions of Costa Rica and El Salvador, have also located their embassies in Tel Aviv, rather than in Jerusalem. It is a bizarre situation; all ambassadors and their staffs--including the U.S. Ambassador and his staff--must make almost daily trips to Jerusalem, because no government business is conducted in Tel Aviv. The United States maintains diplomatic relations with over 150 countries. In all of them, the U.S. Embassy is located in that nation's designated capital. The only exception is Israel where, so far, our government has insisted on locating its embassy in a city other than the capital.

"The question of the status of Jerusalem goes to the heart of the Arab-Israel conflict. To deny the status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel questions the legitimacy of the state."

Congress in favor of moving Embassy to Jerusalem. Despite the fact that, prior to their election, both President Clinton and Vice President Gore assured the public that the U.S. Embassy would be moved to Israel's capital, the Administration has until now blocked all moves in that direction, declaring that it would jeopardize the so-called "final status" talks on Jerusalem.

Leaders of Congress - both Republican and Democratic - have introduced legislation by which the U.S. Embassy would have to be moved to Jerusalem within the next three or four years. That legislation has been endorsed by 93 senators. The U.S. has a lease on a 10-acre embassy lot in Talpiot, a totally Jewish neighborhood in West Jerusalem. It is to be expected therefore that, before too long, reality will prevail and that the U.S. Embassy in Israel will indeed be located in Jerusalem - the capital of one of its closest allies.

The reason given for not moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem is that it might violate "Arab sensitivities". While there would be some posturing, none of the Arab states could afford to do much else. Egypt would not refuse its yearly multi-billion dollar subsidy from Washington. King Abdullah of Jordan would not jeopardize the lifeline that the U.S. has extended to him. Even though the PLO would perhaps once again request suspension of the peace talks, it would soon return to the negotiating table. The question of the status of Jerusalem goes to the heart of the Arab-Israel conflict. To deny the status of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel questions the legitimacy of the state. The move of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem will signal Yassir Arafat once and for all that he will not get U.S. and world support for the division of Jerusalem and for its establishment--in any part of it--as the capital of a new Arab state.

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■ COVER STORY ■

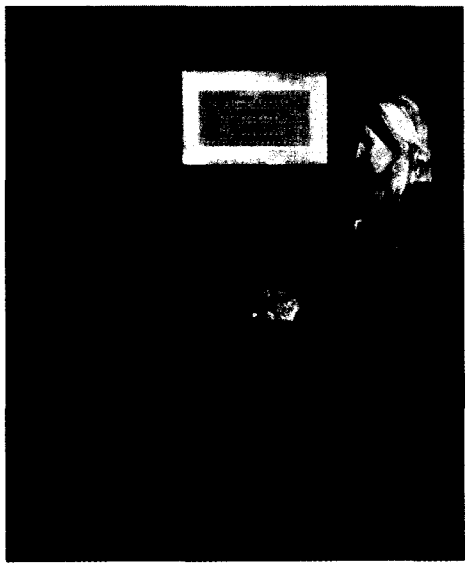
Senior Slump

How federal entitlements hook, and change, the elderly

JOHN HOOD

IN H. G. Wells's 1895 novel *The Time Machine*, an inventor journeys to a distant future in which human beings, now called Eloi, have become infantilized and utterly dependent on machines for their daily sustenance. Horrible monsters known as Morlocks live underground and prey on the hapless Eloi. Wells's hero flees back to the past with a foreboding of social devolution.

American politics today echoes Wells's depressing story: Senior citizens have been infantilized by the political system, and they are easy prey for shameless political Morlocks who use fear to manipulate them. In the presidential race and many other contests, the issue of prescription-drug coverage is crowding out matters of greater concern to the average voter, such as taxes and education. Protecting Social Security and Medicare is a dominant theme in federal races.



From the perspective of social equity, this focus on seniors makes little sense. The state of America's elderly has never been better. Poverty for those over 65 is at historic lows. Medical and technological breakthroughs are making life easier and happier for millions of retirees; in past generations, people who were lucky enough to reach such an advanced age at all tended to be weaker and poorer than their counterparts of today.

At the same time, the trend lines for America's children are pointing in a different direction. During the last three decades of general economic progress, the divorce rate has skyrocketed and the percentage of children growing up in single-parent homes has more than doubled. This has brought about stubbornly high rates of child poverty, far higher than the rate for seniors.

This is a much more urgent social problem than the needs of seniors; so is the sorry state of public education. Why, then, do prescription-drug coverage and other issues related to seniors so dominate the 2000 campaign? Elderly voters are a growing voting bloc, but they are hardly the largest one. In 1972, people over the age of 65 accounted for about 15 percent of the vote. By the 1996 election, despite significant increases in longevity, the proportion had reached only 20 percent. Yes, seniors vote at higher rates than other groups—two-thirds voted in 1996, compared to a third of those aged 18 to 24 and about half of those aged 25 to 44. But the vast majority of voters remain between 25 and 64 years of age. The vote of a senior citizen counts no more than that of a junior one, and there are more of the latter.

The focus on seniors persists, but the seniors themselves didn't set it in motion. When Social Security was established, only about 5 percent of the population was over the age of 65, which was selected as the new retirement age because it was slightly over the average life expectancy at the time. Social Security's immediate effect was not chiefly to provide benefits to seniors but to raise significant federal revenues, which could then be used to "prime the pump" of the economy. Only later—when critics from both parties complained about how little Social Security actually benefited seniors—were benefits increased and eligibility expanded. Medicare and Medicaid followed a similar pattern 30 years later.

The culpability of seniors lies not in the creation of the programs, for which the active political constituency was basically their children, but in the programs' rapid growth over the past two decades. Social Security and the twin medical entitlements have created a generation of seniors who aren't providing the political conservatism that the elderly typically contribute to a republic. The result is a growing entitlement mentality, which leads, too often, to the election of politicians who promise something for nothing.

What's especially annoying about this is that America is full of seniors who—in virtually every other part of their

Mr. Hood is president of the John Locke Foundation, a state-policy think tank in North Carolina, and the author of the forthcoming *Investor Politics: The New Force That Will Transform American Business, Government, and Politics in the 21st Century*.

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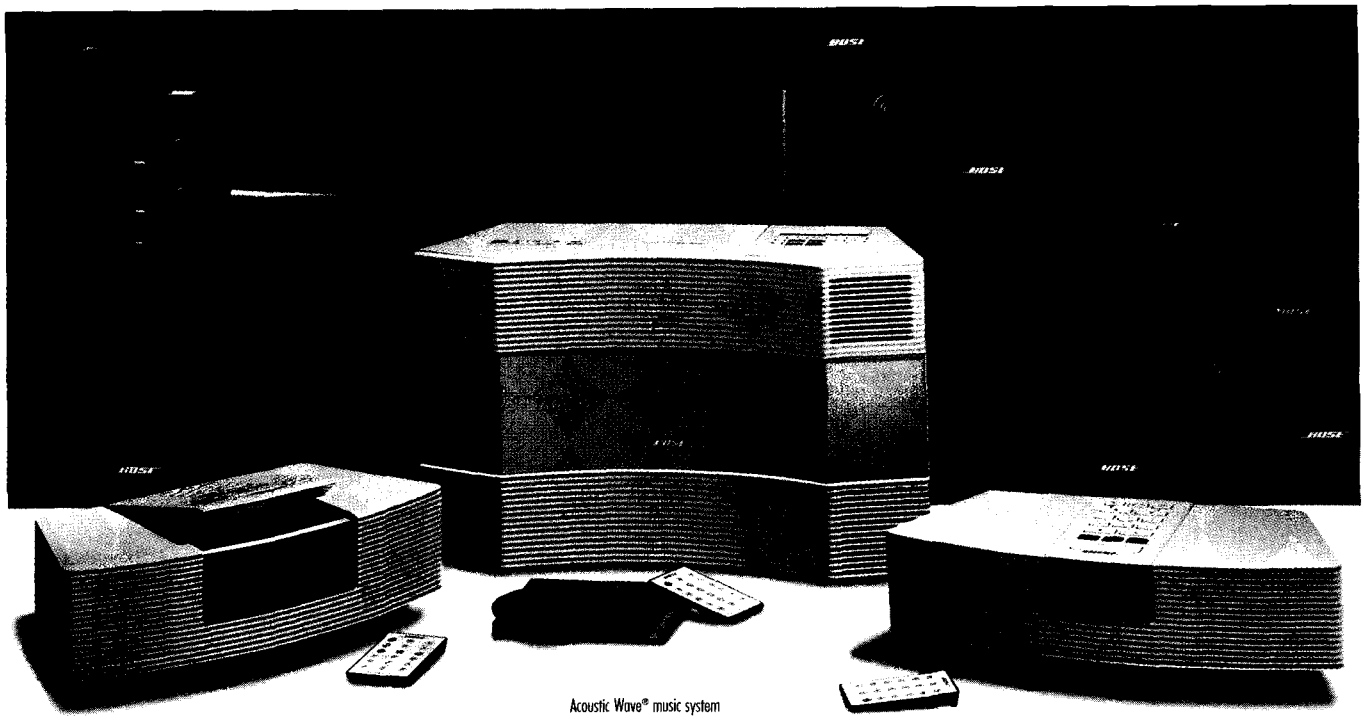

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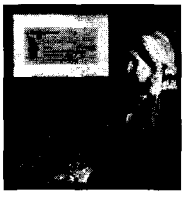
lives—are the smartest shoppers and the most skeptical of flimflammery. By nature, the elderly should be overwhelmingly conservative in politics as well; they should, through their disproportionate participation in elections, offset the natural inclination of younger voters with lower incomes to think that bigger government might be good for them. Seniors are, after all, more experienced in the ways of the world, and typically have the knowledge, time, and resources to be politically active. They should, in essence, be the ants that scold the nation's young grasshoppers about the coming winter.



The conservative instincts of the elderly disappear when it comes to federal fiscal and economic policy.

At the local level, seniors are, in fact, the core constituency of fiscal conservatism. They populate taxpayer associations and complain loudly about property-tax hikes. Because working-age voters often pay their property taxes out of escrow accounts—and thus don't fully realize how much they are paying—it is often the older homeowners paying property taxes from their own bank accounts who scream loudest about the cost.

Older voters also frequently serve as the national conscience on social issues. They remember a time, as Bob Dole famously said in 1996, when the streets were safer, families more secure, and popular culture and entertainment not so vulgar. One of the ways George W. Bush is wisely trying to attract senior voters—without pandering—is to stress the disrepute that Clinton and Gore have brought to Washington. This resonates with voters old enough to remember the days before the White House was available at hourly rates for political shakedowns and pajama parties.

But the conservative instincts of the elderly disappear when it comes to federal fiscal and economic policy. They are the least likely to look favorably on the idea of introducing consumer choice or the private sector into Social Security and Medicare. They are even less attuned than younger voters to regulatory threats to our economic health, such as price controls on oil or the antitrust persecution of Microsoft. The reason? Dependency is psychologically debilitating. Consider the very different ways in which seniors tend to accumulate physical and financial capital. Throughout their working lives, they scrape and save to pay their mortgages. At or near the age of retirement, they own their homes outright, and have a significant portion of the fruits of their labor tied up in them. This makes them extremely vigilant not just about real-estate taxes but about threats to property values from a variety of sources. This in turn makes them a bulwark of stability and community norms, of conservatism in the traditional (though not always ideological) sense.

But today's seniors did not follow the same path when it came to financial investment. Mutual funds, IRAs, and 401(k)s make up the everyday experience of baby boomers—but not necessarily that of the current senior-citizen population. Many seniors grew up during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, when securities markets remained stigmatized by the 1929 crash and workers learned to trust Washington, rather than Wall Street, with their savings.

The seniors who got in on the "ground floor" of the Social Security and Medicare Ponzi schemes have a very skewed perception of the value of government social insurance. In their 1999 book, *The Real Deal: The History and Future of Social Security*, Sylvester J. Schieber and John B. Shoven compared the rate of return enjoyed by early Social Security recipients with what they would have realized from private investments: Retirees born before 1915—who became eligible for full Social Security benefits in 1980—enjoyed a real rate of return from the program that far exceeded what they would have received had they invested the same amount of money in private, large-company stocks.

But the spectacular return on investment that Social Security seemed to provide was not the result of government bonds being safer than the stock market: The real rate of return on stocks was about 6 percent a year from 1940 to 1980, while the return on government bonds, adjusted for inflation, was actually negative. No, the actual reason these retirees perceive Social Security as a good deal is that they received large benefits despite paying relatively little into the system during their working years. Those who retired between 1945 and 1975 received a net transfer of wealth from young generations of roughly $7 trillion in today's dollars.

Similarly, Medicare recipients during the first two decades

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of the program learned precisely the wrong lessons about government-run health care. Some of the proponents of the 1965 bill that created Medicare intended to keep the program's promises affordable, and the federal role in health care limited. In fact, the legislation resulted in a revolutionary change in American medicine: Even as lawmakers were adopting the traditional "cost-plus" reimbursement policies of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans for Medicare, the private-insurance marketplace was in the process of discarding them as costly and ineffective. Employer-based plans had begun to experiment with ways to rein in the tendency for cost-plus finance to encourage patients to consume medical services without regard to price or cost-effectiveness. But as Robert Helms of the American Enterprise Institute points out, "the Medicare legislation locked the government program into a historical straightjacket." Medicare thus fueled a massive increase in health-care infrastructure and services. Hospitals expanded capacity. Expensive new devices were created to diagnose and treat disease.

As a result, the program grew far more rapidly than its creators intended, and faster than its funding stream could finance. In 1964, the Johnson administration projected that Medicare would cost $12 billion by 1990. The real number was $110 billion. More ominously, Medicare conditioned an ever growing legion of elderly recipients to think that health care could and should be obtained at virtually no apparent cost.

Because of this development, 20 percent of the voters in our elections—the retirees—now believe that they paid for their benefits throughout their working lives and deserve them, or even enhanced versions of them. In a world of budget surpluses as far as the eye can see, it is difficult to persuade these seniors that expansion of these programs—which are already destined for collapse in the 2010s or 2020s—would make them fall apart even sooner. Furthermore, because their retirement futures are tied directly to government largesse rather than investment returns from corporations, seniors feel less of a personal stake in fights about trade policy or federal regulation than they do about local issues. Having less experience with financial markets than baby boomers, and not fully realizing the staggering costs that Social Security and Medicare already impose on middle-aged and young workers, the elderly—who should know better—are easily enticed by the prospect of beneficent government outlined by such politicians as Al Gore.

In the short run, I'm afraid, there are few answers. George W. Bush's plan—a comprehensive redesign of Medicare that introduces competition and caps federal spending, while modernizing the benefits package to include prescription drugs—is the best policy on offer in this campaign. But it is clearly not a huge new giveaway, like the one Democrats are proposing, and so may not satisfy the seniors. The ideal solution would be to hop in Wells's time machine, go back several decades, and create Social Security and Medicare as personal-savings programs rather than government entitlements. Today's seniors would have real economic assets, not promises from the government, and would see the profitability of American corporations as directly connected to their own retirement nest egg. Sadly, time travel is the only part of Wells's tale that remains completely in the realm of fantasy. **NR**

Gray Dawn

Does the 'can lady' represent the American future?

MARK STEYN

Hi, everybody. A friend of Bob Dole here. You know it's a little embarrassing to talk about ED. Especially for us conservatives, Republicans, whatever. Every four years many of us on the right find we're coming down with a worse case of it. Yet Electoral Dysfunction is nothing to be ashamed of. Unlike many diseases you get when you're old, this is one you get *from* the old. If you're a Republican candidate, talk to your doctor about it and he'll tell you the chances of getting a vote from any of his elderly patients are about as low as drug prices in Saskatchewan.

Old people vote Democratic: Gore's strongest demographic is 65+. The MTV shots, the Gap clothing are just a front. He should be campaigning in checkered stretch pants and guesting on reruns of Lawrence Welk, which he probably did invent. If we cut off the vote at retirement age, Dubya would be a shoo-in. Instead, after our first black president, Gore's going to be our first geriatric president. For his inauguration, his motorcade drivers should ride low in the seat with only their fishing hats visible.

Don't get me wrong. I like old people. I like old movies. I like old songs. I'll take "Moonlight Becomes You" over "Yo, Bitch! Sit on This" any day. I like old broads. I'd rather date Debbie Reynolds than Cameron Diaz. I like old footwear. How come nobody wears spats any more?

And yet . . . the phrase "the greatest generation" is beginning to stick in my throat like a bottleful of cheap Medicare Viagra before Swingers' Night at the lodge. The elderly are currently the most malign influence on our politics, the beneficiaries of the most outrageous affirmative-action scam in the country, the practitioners of identity politics so ruthless they make the gays look like the Boy Scouts they'd like to be. Statistical fact: America spends more on its old than on its children. When Dubya says, "Leave no child behind," that's code for: Let's leave these whining old coots behind.

But we can't. American electoral politics is currently one nightmare movie with nothing but Jessica Tandy roles. Miss one roadside granny, there'll be another one along in a minute. First, it was Granny D, the New Hampshire granny, walking across the continent for campaign-finance reform. Then she started picking up aluminum cans along the way. No, hang on, that's Granny Winnie, the Iowa granny, who's forced to pick up discarded cans and claim back the deposit to pay for her prescription drugs. Even then, she found she

Mr. Steyn is a columnist for Britain's *Daily Telegraph* and the *Chicago Sun-Times*.

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was reduced to sneaking down to her black Labrador's kennel in the middle of the night and stealing the key to his canine medicine cabinet. Oh, no, wait a minute, that's Granny Aitcheson, the Pennsylvania Avenue granny, who's apparently forced to climb into the Lassie suit, get down on her arthritic limbs, and limp off to the vet—presumably because it gives Al a laugh.

It's outrageous that many seniors are forced to choose between their weekly prescription and Robert Goulet in dinner theater.

Now I like a heartwarming human-interest vignette as much as the next guy, but I'm grannied out. If Granny D had her way, and campaign-finance reform got passed, the only lovable old-timers picking up cans along the road would be Strom Thurmond and Jesse Helms trying to raise enough to scrape together one lousy radio ad to counter the tide of big-time Clymers in the media. As for Granny Winnie, I was initially sympathetic. You know how many Dr. Peppers you have to pick up just to get enough for a bottle of ibuprofen? So I was happy to do my bit and swing through Des Moines, chucking cases of Bud out the window. But it turns out she *chooses* to pick up cans for a living. Her son's a successful businessman, but, although she let him pay for her new roof and her property taxes, she won't accept money from him for prescription drugs because she feels strongly that *you* should pay for them instead. I'm no trained professional, but, if you'll forgive a touch of the Gail Sheehys, my diagnosis would be that Granny Winnie has some weird aluminum-can fetish hitherto unknown to medical science.

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There are genuine issues here: It's outrageous that many seniors are forced to choose between their weekly prescription and Robert Goulet in dinner theater. But the truth is, Granny Winnie doesn't need money from America's working stiffs: Diane Sawyer, Jane Pauley, and Bryant Gumbel are desperate to get her on the air, and if every American senior did just one high-paying network interview, they could chug down all the prescription drugs they want. CBS already runs a commendable AARP pilot program, allowing many seniors to enjoy a little light, undemanding work in their twilight years—it's called, I believe, "the news division"—and there's no reason why this couldn't be greatly expanded.

Instead, Congress is considering a law to allow Americans to import cheap drugs from other countries, such as Canada. It's true drug prices are lower in Canada. Here's something else that's lower up there, too:

Your salary.

Conversely, here's something that's way, way higher:

Your tax bill.

But the life of a Canuck senior is pretty cushy. Not only are the pills cheaper, but so's pretty much everything else. Your apartment's cheaper, restaurants are cheaper, computer software is cheaper. Indeed, life is cheaper, as you'll discover when you're lying on a gurney in the corridor at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal. Not only are Prozac pills a third cheaper, but you'll need twice as many of them to see you through to spring while you're waiting to hear whether you've been scheduled for cancer treatment. In the U.S., you'll wait, on average, ten days. In Canada, you'll wait 35 to 45 days, maybe more in Quebec, though eventually they send you down to Plattsburgh, N.Y., or Burlington, Vt., so you can die in a foreign hospital, unsurrounded by tiresome loved ones. Average wait for a cranial MRI scan? In the U.S., three days. In Canada, 150 days. Best of all, you'll have plenty of time to sit around the waiting room, reading the aptly named northern seniors' publication, *CARP News*, which recently deplored the "astounding" statistic that 40 percent of elderly Canadians are regular drinkers. So don't expect to sip the occasional daiquiri-laced Ensure without being hectored about it.

But hey, it's the good life you've heard so much about from Sen. Jim Jeffords and others, isn't it? So don't let me stop you. Matter of fact, why don't you leave right now? That way, you won't be around on November 7, Florida will return to the Bush column where it belongs, and the free world won't be consigned to eight years of Al Gore because you cranky ingrates don't feel you're being pandered to enough.

Now it's true that in Quebec average life expectancy is 78, a tad higher than in the U.S. On the other hand, in Albania average life expectancy is 73. Albania is the unhealthiest country in Europe: a decayed, impoverished, lawless, nasty little basket case of a state, where there's no health system to speak of, 98 percent of the population are chain smokers, the prescription-drug program involves swimming to Italy, and any Albanian Granny Winnie tramping along the rutted highways is unlikely to find many soda cans because, thanks to the late Enver Hoxha's ban on vehicular traffic, there are no cars to throw them out the windows of. (Incidentally, Hoxha's eco-Stalinist Albania is a reasonable approximation of what Al Gore's America would look like if he decided to

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implement the full *Earth in the Balance* platform.) Yet Albanian life expectancy is closing in on America's, and even Canada's: These old guys are indestructible. Nonetheless, I understand the urgent need to improve life expectancy in the U.S. God forbid any of the codgers should kick off halfway through Gore's second term, before they've had a chance to vote for Hillary in 2008.

Canadians, for their part, tend to fret about the 40 million Americans without health insurance. The vast bulk of these tend to be healthy youngsters in their first jobs; if you're a 19-year-old waitress, having no medical coverage is a very sound bet. As to those pills, one reason they cost more down here is because if Granny Winnie's a little short of breath from a hard day's can-collecting and gets one of the tablets stuck in her throat, she can sue the pharmaceutical companies into oblivion for making them too big. You can't do that in Canada. That's another reason why even those drugs not covered by the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board cost half the price in Canada that they do in America.

I can't help feeling that the geriatric hammerlock on American democracy is part of some vast left-wing plot.

I'm no conspiracy theorist, but I can't help feeling that the geriatric hammerlock on American democracy is part of some vast left-wing plot. Conservatives often complain about the liberal bias of the media, but it seems to me that, as we nitpick over the comments of TV news anchors, that we're missing the most obvious liberal bias of all: the ads. To sit through a network newscast is to be exposed to a barrage of incontinence pads, laxatives, and those funny chairs that carry you up and down stairs. I'd never heard of male itch till I watched Tom Brokaw; I'd never *had* male itch till I watched Dan Rather. The ads on the news are expressly designed to make younger viewers—i.e., more-Republican viewers—flee in terror to the wrestling channel, leaving only cranky old bastards to follow current events. You're not telling me this is pure coincidence.

Oh, well. Maybe those Floridians will come to their senses. Maybe come the big day they'll pop a couple of Viagra, set the Barcalounger to cruise control, call the nurse over, and never get to the polls at all. Then America's politicians can forget about devising even more ways to kiss up to them, and get on with more pressing issues like Social Security privatization before the worker-retiree ratio increases to the point where one pimply burger-flipper will be supporting entire gated communities. In the meantime, as someone once said, never trust anyone over 30. And, in that vein, let me recommend an old film from the Swingin' Sixties, *Wild in the Streets*, in which the voting age is lowered to 14, rock star Max Frost is elected president and—acting on the principle that you can't trust them—has everyone over 30 dragged off and stuffed with LSD. A nonprescription drug, admittedly, but I'd like to think Granny Winnie would approve. **NR**

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ROB LONG

THEY are, I know, the greatest generation. They stormed the beaches at Normandy, they smashed Hitler's Fortress Europe, they Rosie-the-Riveted a thousand warships, they saved the world.

And then, back home after years of blood and dirt and sacrifice, they built bedroom cities and paved over orange groves, headed to work in dress khakis and grey flannel, built skyscrapers and atom-smashers, and eventually sent a man to the moon.

But today, they mostly drive too slow, right blinker blinking, a sliver of mottled skull flesh peeking over the driver's side headrest like a yellow crescent moon, on their way to an early-bird dinner, after a long day calling up talk-radio stations to complain about the cost of prescription drugs. They sit in the lobbies of cut-rate stockbrokers, watching the ticker tick up their mountains of cash—they remain the richest segment of the population, hands-down—flipping through cruise-ship catalogs and packaged-tour brochures.

They are remarkably easy to hoodwink, these destroyers of Fascism. When they get a letter from Ed McMahon, they actually think they might "already have won." When a callow voice oozes confidence over the phone, they cash in some long bonds and invest it all in Accutech International, or whatever rent-an-office outfit the boiler-room huckster is pushing. They purchase every lame product they see, from Craftmatic Adjustable Beds to Itty Bitty Booklights. Politicians can scare a million of them before breakfast, terrify the rest before lunch, and claim to "save Medicare" around dinner time, which is about 4 P.M.

How did this generation—forged in war, tempered by mortar fire, flinty and rock-tough in their fatigues and counterman's hats—get so whiny? How do you get from "Next stop, Tokyo!" to "Who's going to pay for my Percocet?" How do you get from "Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy" to "I've fallen and I can't get up?"

A strong, silent population is only one aspect of the legacy of wartime. Another, which emerges over the years, once the combat dreams stop and the shrapnel scars fade, is a comfortable faith in government bureaucracy. It was, after all, the federal government that smashed the Axis devils; it was the federal government that paid the GI Bill; it was the federal government that built the highways and created something called the "aerospace industry." Why not prescription drugs? Why not elder day care? Why not sue the Publishers Clearing House for deceptive practices, as the State of Florida (Florida! Of course!) recently did. Why not sue McDonald's for serving hot

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coffee that's too hot? Why pay taxes on Social Security benefits? Why means-test any federal handout?

Spend an hour watching a C-SPAN call-in show. The telephone lines are allotted, irrelevantly, to "liberals" and "conservatives." The true fault line of American politics isn't left–right, it's young–old. It doesn't matter which blower the clenched, angry old voice is droning out of—it's demanding free stuff, subsidized this, and government-provided that. Young liberals and young conservatives may disagree about the fringe issues, but they can all decipher a pay stub. They all know what FICA stands for. It's a transfer payment to Nana, sliced out of the paycheck before it's printed, so she can take that whale-watching cruise to Alaska. Young people, of course, aren't watching C-SPAN during the day. They're working. And Election Day, conveniently enough, is a Tuesday, which, as everyone knows, is the busiest workday of the week.

Years ago, during one of PBS's most irritating pledge drives, the featured program was hosted by John Bradshaw, a round-shouldered therapist with the devil's facial hair. In a series of riveting lectures, he convinced his audience that the key to their individual troubles—I'm too fat; I'm too thin; I'm always sad; I'm too happy; I can't love anyone; I can't *not* love *everyone*—could be found in some repressed childhood experience. The way to healing, he claimed, was to root around in the memory until a suitable villain appeared (Mom, Dad) and dine off that for a while. His audience was predominantly people in their late 40s/early 50s. And as the camera panned across their anxious, weeping faces, you could see that Bradshaw had figured out that the most consistent aspect of the baby-boomer psyche, from Woodstock to Lewinsky, was a willingness—no, an *enthusiasm*—for blaming it all on Mom and Dad.

Here were sovereign American citizens in the prime of their lives, faces glazed with tears and snot, blubbering, blaming, bear-hugging stuffed animals, trying to get in touch with something called their "inner child," and an appalling thought shivered through me: What's it going to be like when *these* people get old? Say this for the "Greatest Generation": They don't cotton to the psychobabble. You don't hear a lot of "my mommy never hugged me" and "my father abused me emotionally" and "I'm really trying to get *me* to take care of *me*" around the ice sculpture on the Princess Cruise ship. But when the boomers get old, we are all in deep trouble. It will be sanctimonious, aggrieved self-pity—24/7.

So the whining classes keep coming, like the waves of brave men on Omaha Beach. They are coming for free prescription drugs and preferred parking, for automatic COLA bumps in their Social Security check and the right to drive like Mr. Magoo. They are coming to storm my paycheck.

This year, I turned 35. A couple—good friends of mine—have two children; one is four, the other barely eight months. They are healthy, sunny, intelligent children, and I love them dearly. But I can also do the math: When the boy is my age, I'll be retiring and he'll be entering his peak earning years; when the girl turns 35, I'll be comparing cruise-line catalogs for the most generous midnight-buffet spread. Study well, my little children. Learn much. Work hard. I'll be waiting. I have placed all my EggBeaters™ in one basket.

It's true, what they say: Children *are* the future. Let the shakedown begin. **NR**

Violent Fantasy

It's not the Hollywood gore that's the problem

JONAH GOLDBERG

LIKE presidential elections and the Olympics, political denunciations of Hollywood violence have become a bedrock quadrennial American tradition. At least every four years—sometimes more often, if there's a school shooting—movie-industry lobbyist Jack Valenti simultaneously sucks up to politicians and lectures them about the First Amendment. Liberal activists who denounce Joe Camel as a pied piper of social coercion swear that screen idols have no influence on human behavior. Television executives who make billions of dollars off the persuasive power of 30-second commercials declare that the 26- and 54-minute programs those ads punctuate have no net impact on their viewers.

It shouldn't surprise anyone that there are no new arguments since the last go-around, when Bob Dole denounced "nightmares of depravity" and the "mainstreaming of deviancy" in a slew of films he'd never seen. This season, a Federal Trade Commission report—released with precise political timing—details how the film industry targets very young audiences for mature films. While this gives the controversy a newsier feel, the report's details merely confirm what everybody knew: Hollywood makes its money from kids.

Of course, what really makes this year's repeat of history a farce is that this time it is the Democrats who are bemoaning the "coarsening of our culture." In years past, we could at least expect some ritualistic huffing and puffing about free speech from the Hollywood liberals; but this time around they know that their Al doesn't really mean it. "Go, go, go, Al! We need a little spanking!" cheered Bette Midler at a star-studded fundraiser recently, giving full expression to the gravity with which Hollywood views this "crisis."

Despite all of the posturing, nobody is addressing the real problem with Hollywood: It's not the violence at all, but the message of moral relativism. Violence has been a constant in world culture. You can draw a line starting from cave paintings, and trace it through all visual media up to this weekend's latest blockbuster. Greek tragedies, Shakespeare's plays, Japanese picture books, and Native American oral histories can hold their own with just about any Schwarzenegger film in terms of murder and gore. Talking about violence—even graphic violence—as something "new" is like talking about a disturbing rise in the use of percussion instruments in music.

The antiviolence handwringers contend that it is the graph-

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ic, realistic nature of modern depictions that does real damage. But if simple film violence were the problem, one would look for some correlation between crime rates and violent-movie distribution. Such correlations remain elusive.

A more realistic contention is that while movie violence is not bad in itself, it can be bad when presented in a morally harmful context. During the 1992–93 round of Hollywood-bashing, Sen. Paul Simon threatened the television networks with government "action" if they didn't clean themselves up; in response, the networks sponsored a UCLA study that concluded that "context is the key to the determination of whether or not the use of violence is appropriate." The problem for liberals, though, is that they don't think there are many contexts where violence is permissible—save, perhaps, in cautionary tales about Nazis, southern slaveowners, and military homophobes. The Left always despised Dirty Harry movies, for example, because the moral context of those films suggested that criminals were, in fact, *criminals*, and that a liberal do-gooder court system was allowing the bad guys to rule the streets.

In a 1992 article in *Reason* magazine, aptly entitled "Faster, Hollywood, Kill! Kill!" Tevi Troy suggested that the popularity of *Dirty Harry*, *Death Wish*, and other violent vigilante films was actually a healthy expression of public discontent with the crime wave of the 1960s and '70s. Watching Dirty Harry administer rough justice was a healthy release valve for frustrated Americans who did not, after all, take the law into their own hands upon leaving the theater. When Dirty Harry killed, he may have been defying the legal order—but he was still confirming the moral order. Troy's analysis is surely correct: Action heroes from Perseus to Captain Kirk have always taken the law into their own hands; they are men of action, with a well-defined sense of the moral right.

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Talking about violence as something 'new' is like talking about a disturbing rise in the use of percussion instruments in music.

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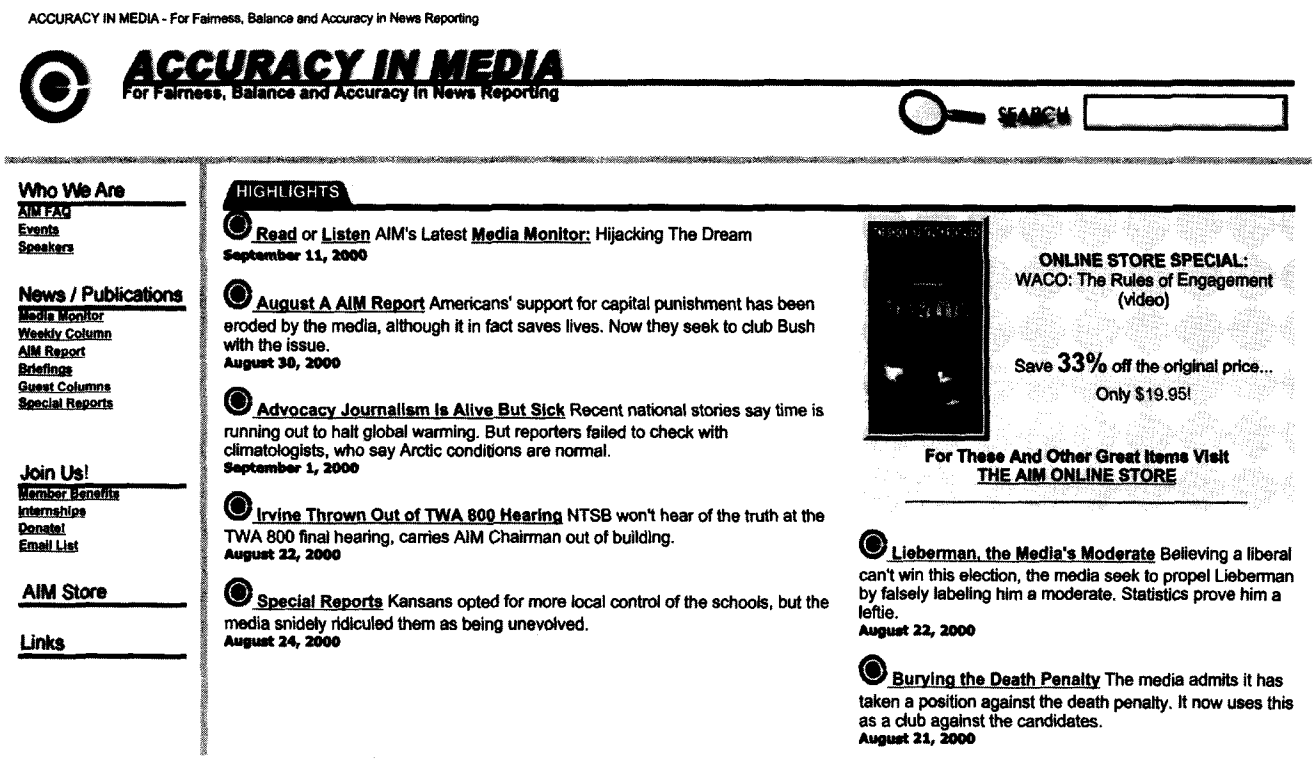
This was the central appeal of the films of John Wayne, who—from 1949 to 1974—was on the annual list of Top 10 biggest box-office movie stars for a record 25 years. Out of his well over 100 films, you can count on two hands the number that didn't depict him shooting, slugging, or ordering the shooting or slugging of someone. A whole generation of men wanted to imitate Wayne, seeing him as the definition of an authentic male. The Left criticized his films for glorifying war, because they didn't show the terrible consequences of battle; as a result, in many of the Left-influenced war films of the last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30 years, we have seen in much more graphic detail how unpleasant and messy killing can be.

Violence in popular entertainment, then, has a complicated history; it's neither new nor especially harmful. What really *is* new and harmful is the trendy moral relativism that characterizes so many movies and TV shows. These cultural products receive rave reviews from liberal activists for their "positive" (and relatively nonviolent) content. But in these films, protagonists do not defy the legal order so that they can uphold a higher moral order; instead, these "heroes" rebel against the notion that there is any moral order at all.

"Janie, today I quit my job. And then I told my boss to go f**k himself, and then I blackmailed him for almost sixty thousand dollars. Pass the asparagus," says Lester Burnham (played by Kevin Spacey), the hero of *American Beauty*, one of the most critically acclaimed movies of the last decade. A brilliantly executed film of a very conventional story, *American Beauty* typifies the reigning attitude in today's Hollywood: The pursuit of personal liberation, especially sexual liberation, is the only legitimately heroic endeavor in American life.

Lester Burnham is a bourgeois professional with a bourgeois-professional wife and an alienated daughter. Lester "suddenly" realizes—just in time for a midlife crisis—that he hates his conventional life when he becomes sexually obsessed with a friend of his high-school-aged daughter. "I feel like I've been in a coma for the past twenty years. And I'm just now waking up," declares Lester, who commences on a campaign of "self-improvement" that involves flipping off all social conventions and indulging every desire.

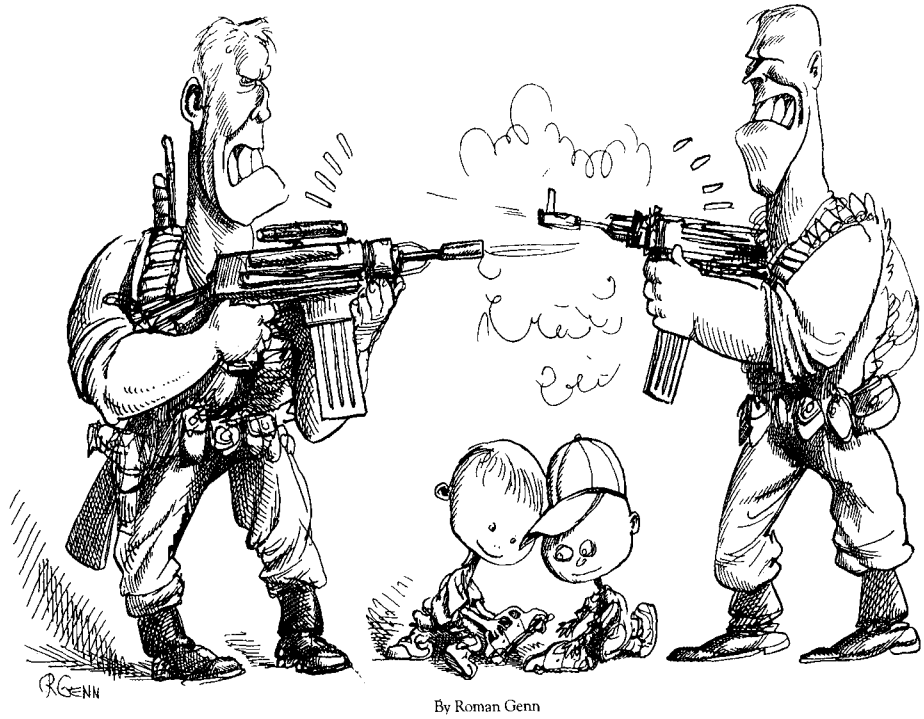
"Your father seems to think this type of behavior is something to be proud of," Lester's wife tells their daughter at the dinner table.

"And your mother seems to prefer I go through life like a f**king prisoner while she keeps my d**k in a mason jar under the sink."

American Beauty won the Oscar for best picture last year, but it wasn't alone in its message. Indeed, the winners in almost every major category involved some variation on the theme that external moral authority is illegitimate, or that personally designed morality is superior. For example, another academy favorite was *Boys Don't Cry*, a film about a petty criminal, a transsexual woman who prefers masquerading as a boy in order to seduce and bed teenage girls. What raised the film to heroic status for Hollywood is its assertion that America remains, at heart, a nation of sexual fascists who cruelly impose conventional bourgeois standards on courageous nonconformists.

The entertainment industry has hammered home the idea that conformity of any kind is a sign of spiritual surrender. While films with excessive violence often receive considerable critical and popular scrutiny, the idea that we are all our own priests is celebrated throughout the popular culture. This idea is found even in technically well-made films like *Dead Poets Society* and the pernicious *Pleasantville*, both of which redefined the concept of "to thine own self be true" to mean "thine own self is the only truth." It is also the moral of hundreds of individual TV shows and movies; it is the core social and political insight of rock 'n' roll and rap music. How else to explain the familiar litany of rap songs which exult in killing and rape?

This attitude makes violent films all the more poisonous. In a world where no set of moral principles is superior to any other, why not make heroes out of murderers? This is the lesson of nearly the entire Quentin Tarantino *oeuvre* and its many ripoffs. More and more often, we are seeing psychopaths and serial killers as protagonists. An early example can be found in the 1984 *Terminator*, in which the audience is invited to see things through the eyes of a killing machine—and enjoy it. Since then, the pace has only accelerated. In the 1991 *Silence of the Lambs*, Hannibal Lecter was a profoundly sympathetic cannibalistic serial killer; in the upcoming sequel—if it's adapted loyally from the novel—he will be the hero.



By Roman Genn

What's important to remember about this amoral context for violence is that it stems from the amoral worldview of the Hollywood filmmakers; and at the very core of that worldview is sex. It's a bit of cliché by now to point out that liberals fret over violence in movies, and conservatives about sex. But there's a good reason for that. We know from endless studies as well as common sense and experience that a tendency for

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violence, especially in boys, manifests itself without much prodding from the culture. Give a young boy a Barbie doll and he will, in all likelihood, try to make a gun out of it. But sex is more complicated. Young boys who know a million ways to kill a man—hypothetically—are quite ignorant about sex, if left to their own devices until puberty.

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Give a young boy a Barbie doll and he will, in all likelihood, try to make a gun out of it. But sex is more complicated.

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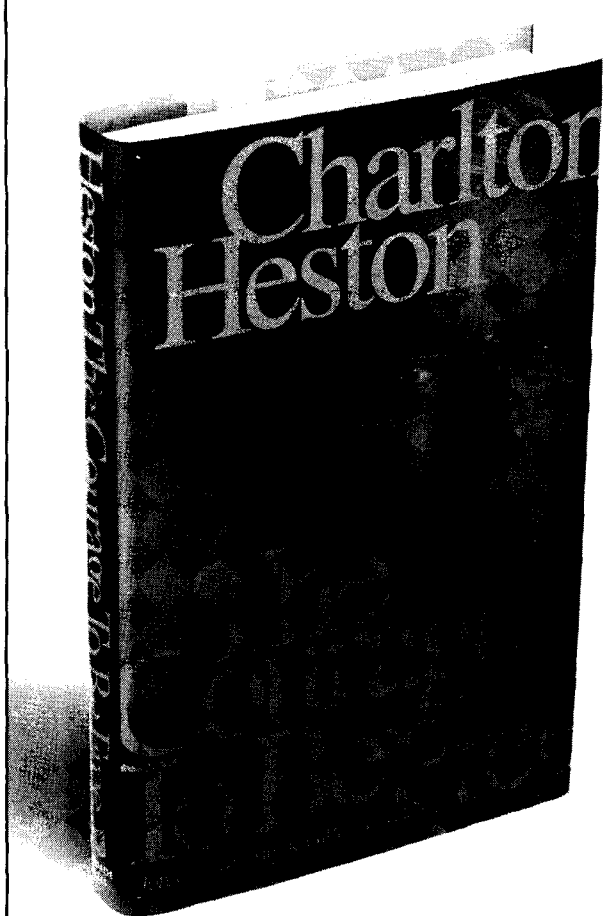
Hollywood changes that dynamic. In its contention that not only should sexual appetites be indulged, but those who most fully indulge them, without regret or remorse, are living the most authentic lives, it offers young boys a recipe for mayhem.

And where did Hollywood get this idea? In the mirror, of course. Consider again the heroism of Lester Burnham in *American Beauty*: Here is a man with a family and a job. His prosperous life of responsibilities and obligations is depicted as a soul-numbing suburban gulag. He is a hero to himself for quitting his job, blackmailing his old boss, and abandoning his responsibilities, all because he wants to boink a high-school girl. Now, when you are a Hollywood star who can afford to have your business manager pay off your alimony; and you can afford to send your kids off someplace out of sight; and you can indulge in an occasional boink with the office intern, it's very easy to give this sort of advice. It is especially easy when you have an entire entourage of sycophants who speak to you of your entitlement to such behavior. Remember, these are people who go into conniptions if they're not seated immediately at restaurants; and a recent issue of *Entertainment Weekly* reported that a number of Hollywood stars, including Barbra Streisand and Tom Cruise, have even instructed their staffs not to look them directly in the eye because they find it too uncomfortable.

It should go without saying that this lifestyle is not for everyone. For people with limited budgets and a need to look others in the eye—i.e., those "who work hard and play by the rules," in the words of Bill Clinton—this advice can be disastrous. Its central insight is that the moral concerns of others, even the worth of others, can be dismissed. The FTC report that launched this latest round of Hollywood-bashing was itself prompted by the Columbine massacre in Littleton, Colo. But children in Colorado have had access to guns and been exposed to violence for over a century. What nobody ever told those kids until recently is that you can buy your own morality retail. **NR**



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The Eclipse of Risk

How the welfare state vanquished uncertainty

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

AL GORE's use of the adjective "risky" to disparage any policy proposal put forward by his opponent has now traveled the entire route from campaign rhetoric, via late-night comic patter, to the trash can of politico-linguistic trivia, where it rests at peace with "normalcy," "missile gap," and Willie Horton. I understand that Gore still uses the word off-camera; but this only demonstrates—as if any demonstration were needed—that politicians have no sense of the absurd.

But the fact remains, Gore's people were on to something with that gambit. The contemplative sentry in *Iolanthe* identified the two great domains in which political emotions dwell: ". . . every boy and every gal,/That's born into the world alive,/Is either a little Liberal,/Or else a little Conservative!" Underlying this great divide are a number of lesser dichotomies: the preference for authority over autonomy, for example, or for stasis over change, or for the heroic over the domestic, as well as even older, more primitive antagonisms, such as rustic vs. urban and the rooted divisions about religion and race. These are the deep springs that feed our political passions.

And then there is security versus risk. In employing "risky" as a scare word, Gore speaks to those who cherish their security and fear risk: a powerful appeal, as practically all of us find ourselves in that frame of mind at least some of the time, and large numbers of citizens never leave it.

Investment bankers have a term I rather like: They speak of a client's "appetite for risk." Each of us has it, and this appetite, like others, varies widely from one person to another. At one extreme you have a person like the late Sir James Goldsmith, who lived on the edge all his life. Goldsmith had made and lost a fortune by age 20, at which point, penniless, he eloped with the daughter of a Bolivian millionaire. Churchill was another case, living by his wits from one book or newspaper contract to another, serving champagne at dinner even when broke, and losing fortunes at the gaming tables well into his 70s.

Those of us of the political Right feel instinctively that people like this are of our party. The political Left is hostile to risk, and claims—falsely, of course—the power to abolish it. Around 1930, Arthur Koestler attended a conference of socialists in Moscow. A speaker was giving a lengthy description of the joyful life that all would enjoy in the socialist paradise. In the midst of this, André Malraux blurted out: "And what about the child run over by a tram-car?" To which another participant responded: "In a perfect, planned socialist transport system there will be no accidents."

This was fantasy; and while some such strain of wishful thinking is always present in left-wing social prescriptions, Koestler's story is not entirely fair to social democrats of the moderate type, who seek to improve us without hoping to perfect us. There has indeed been a great reduction in traffic fatalities per vehicle since 1930, and social controls of a type resisted by conservatives—compulsory seat belts, for example—can plausibly claim some of the credit. (Though it is an interesting, probably unanswerable, question whether the same results could not have been achieved by relying on self-interest.)

In fact, both great political persuasions make appeals to security, though for quite different purposes. The word "security" occurs in two current policy topics: "Social Security," a creation of the Left, which they jealously guard, and "national security," a favorite of the political Right. Here is the key to the difference in mentality. To the Left, security is a goal, an ending—a corral into which the population must be penned, so that they can be watched over and kept safe from harm. To the Right it is a beginning: a harbor, well-defended but open to the sea, from which we can sally out to take our chances in the storms of the world.

Supposing, of course, that we want to. The great success of the Left in the 20th century arose from the fact that most of us have not much appetite for risk, except perhaps for a few years in our youth, and that the promise offered by the Left—to reduce the risk in our lives by applying social controls to all around us—has wide appeal. It must also be conceded that the Left often took great risks to advance its cause. You could hardly call Lenin "risk-averse"—or FDR, for that matter.

In the world we live in now, however, those adventures in social engineering are far behind us. The 20th-century Left succeeded beyond its wildest dreams. John Maynard Keynes was regarded as a bold radical in his time; he nonetheless believed that no government should be trusted to control more than 25 percent of its nation's wealth. In several of the European social democracies of today, the figure exceeds 50 percent; even in the United States, the great bastion of economic liberty, it is 33 percent. Along with this tremendous expansion of the wealth—and consequently of the power—of the state has come a great cultural revolution, an upending of traditional values, so that the freakish and outlandish are declared "normal" by judicial fiat, while commonplace social virtues—marital fidelity, patriotism, religious observance, truthfulness—are openly scoffed at, and the military virtues are being methodically stomped out of existence.

Both these revolutions, the economic and the cultural, take us in the same direction, as has often been noted. Every change in our culture this past 40 years has had the effect of removing something—the family, the church, the private academy—that stood between the individual and the state. Thus the great victories of the Left have all bolstered state power; and having occupied so much territory, the Left must now defend it. To be sure, there are still small advances for them to make on a few fronts. We do not yet have "gay marriage," and citizens are still permitted to own firearms, smoke cigarettes, and hire their own doctors. Still, the Left can

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hardly hope to improve much on its colossal 20th-century triumphs. Its main task is therefore to defend—to conserve—what they have won.

The Left's shift from offense to defense explains the reversal in polarity of the "gender gap," which occurred in 1964. Prior to that year, women seem (the statistics are firm only back to 1952) to have consistently preferred Republican candidates in presidential elections; then they swung decisively to Democrats. They also began voting in greater numbers, and in elections since 1980 more women than men have voted. It is only the fact that men prefer Republicans by much wider margins than women prefer Democrats that has allowed us any Republican administrations at all.

On the security-versus-risk question, women pile in on the "security" side. Though there are, of course, exceptions (a female cousin introduced me to skydiving), women generally have a lower appetite for risk than men have. Female gamblers, female speculators, female practitioners of extreme sports, female explorers, female soldiers are a scattered few. Women's general preference for security over risk was the source of both the old gender gap and its 1964 reversal. Before 1964, security could be found in traditional conservative verities, in home and church and community. LBJ's campaign to portray Barry Goldwater as a reckless militarist broke the spell, and the Great Society did the rest: "Security" is now represented by the welfare state.

There is a sense, in fact, in which women were just waiting for the welfare state. Women are natural socialists. Anyone who has lived in a Communist country has noticed that women are much keener supporters of the system than men. George Orwell knew this, and has the hero of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* say: "It was always the women, and above all the young ones, who were the most bigoted adherents of the Party, the swallowers of slogans, the amateur spies and nosers-out of unorthodoxy . . ."

The connection between femaleness and socialism was noticed as far back as circa 400 B.C.: In *The Assemblywomen*, Aristophanes has the women of Athens, disguised as men, taking over the assembly and voting themselves into power. Once in charge, they institute a program of pure socialism:

> Everyone is to have an equal share in everything and to live on that; we won't have one man rich while another lives in penury, one man farming hundreds of acres while another hasn't got enough land to get buried in . . . No one will be motivated by need: Everybody will have everything . . . the children will regard all older men as fathers . . .

Aristophanes' aim is bawdy comedy—it all ends with ugly old women demanding fair access to the services of virile young men (an early plea for affirmative action)—but along the way he put his finger on an important truth about human nature.

The feminization of American politics—more women voting than men, and women preferring the party of the state—helps shore up the social-democratic status quo. The phenomenon a colleague refers to as "the wussification of America" follows logically: no more risk, please. No more talk about rolling back the state or downsizing the government departments that keep us safe and warm. No more of those nasty handguns. No restraints on the trial lawyers, who are working heroically to purge all risk from the products we buy in the marketplace.

It's going to get worse. The other big risk-averse segment of the population is the elderly (see cover story, page 56), who are ever more numerous. This is a global phenomenon: In 100 years, the world's population will be older—and birth rates lower—than ever before. As the median age increases, risk avoidance will become an obsession.

So look for the wussification of the world. Steven Mosher's new book, *Hegemon*, argues that China will seek to dominate Asia; but a Chinese friend I discussed the book with poohpoohed these fears. "He forgets the one-child policy," my friend said. "Half the people in China have no son; the other half have just one, who has been spoiled rotten. Chinese people are not going to sacrifice their 'little emperor' to fight some imperial war." In short, the Chinese will lose their appetite for risk—at least, for the very major risk involved in starting a war.

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The phenomenon a colleague refers to as 'the wussification of America' follows logically: no more risk, please.

■

For millennia, human beings lived with levels of risk that are unimaginable to us now. Life was a daily lottery, from infancy on, and the stakes were ultimate. John Colet, the 15th-century English humanist, was one of only two (out of 22) siblings to survive childhood—probably not a remarkable distinction in the premodern world. Well within living memory, an infected blister could be fatal. Now we have conquered risk, or at least pushed it to the periphery of our awareness, and those of us who occasionally feel inclined to seek risk must go out of our way to find it. Barring catastrophe, the world of the 21st century will be a social-democratic utopia—a dull, statist, risk-free Sweden, dominated by the values of the matron, the pensioner, the trial lawyer, and the valetudinarian.

I like my personal security as well as the next person, and the thought of burying 20 out of 22 children is unbearable; but a world without risk will be colorless and tame. It will also be economically and culturally stagnant. Businesses hedged about with risk-reducing regulations and watched over by eagle-eyed trial lawyers will not innovate. A coddled, supervised, feminized, disarmed populace will create nothing of value and will live to no purpose—and will be dimly *aware* that it lives to no purpose. Brian Aldiss wrote a story about a smug, safe, bourgeois world of the future that finds it necessary to license a small number of deviants to shock and smash and pillage, just to reintroduce some necessary randomness. Perhaps we shall come to that. After all, most of what the human race has achieved was done against the odds; do we really want to drive risk out of our lives? And if we do, will it, as Horace said of nature, somehow find a way back in? **NR**

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Dear Rusty,

The trick here is not to say anything on Tuesday night that might be considered "exaggerated," whatever that means.

To that end, what I'm doing right now is reaching out to certain folks who have known, and, I hope, respected me throughout the years, to clarify the things that I did, in fact, do, the things that I did not, in fact, do, and more importantly, the things that I may be said to have maybe done, taking into consideration the now-current concept in quantum physics of an infinite matrix of universes embracing an infinite array of possibilities.

I guess what I'm really saying here is that I'm going to list all the things that I may take credit for on Tuesday, for some reason. And I'd appreciate it if you'd back me up, if asked.

Okay, then:

1. In the early 1970s, I invented the electric car. You saw the elaborate drawings, the specifications for the rechargeable battery cell, and the sophisticated design elements in a detailed collection of technical blueprints. I entrusted them to you when I left to serve my country in Vietnam, and you foolishly lost them, and/or burned them to keep warm during the oil-price shock of 1973.

2. My sister died of lung cancer acquired during a prolonged visit to Houston, which has the worst air quality in America.

3. You, or someone you know well, is taking the popular anti-depressant Zoloft. You, or someone you know well, also has a listless, unhappy house pet. It turns out that you, or someone you know well, can get Zoloft prescribed for the pet, take it yourself, and save several hundred dollars per year. This is good news for you, or someone you know well, but terrible news for your house pet, which still suffers from feelings of futility and worthlessness.

4. Bill Clinton, in the throes of impeachment, depressed about his legacy, moping around the White House, once turned to me, eyes filled with tears, and asked if I thought he should resign. I was silent for a moment, then I turned to him, and slapped him across the face. "Stop whining," I said, "and get on with the people's business." I told you, or someone you know well, this story the day after it happened, whenever that was.

5. While in high school, I organized the cafeteria workers at St. Alban's into Local 137 of the International Brotherhood of Food Service Workers. I did the same with the room-service waiters at the ordinary, run-of-the-mill Washington, D.C., apartment building where my family lived when not busy on the farm. This was back in the days when most apartment buildings had room service, bellhops, continental breakfast, and nightly turndown service.

6. It was not a hotel. It was an apartment building with amenities.

7. You are either the friend, or you personally know the friend, who experienced HMO negligence and/or an inability to pay for expensive prescription drugs. You are either the friend, or you personally know the friend, who died in my arms, after making me promise that my first official act as president would be to fix the health-care crisis in America. (This might be a tricky one if you're out and about after I've carefully described your death scene. Let's talk about this.)

8. In the 1960s, while studying at Harvard, I interceded during a hate crime. A lone African-American man was being attacked by six—no, wait, make that eight—white thugs with chains and pipes. Wait—let's make that knives and unregistered handguns. I busted a few heads, took a bullet in the fleshy part of my arm, scared the rest of the cowards off, and saved the life of that very grateful, very scared young African-American. You were that African-American. This might be hard to pull off, Rusty, unless you're doing some kind of radio call-in thing. So maybe we should say that you and I interceded together? Hmmmm. That doesn't seem to work, either. It really should be me, alone, facing the eight Klansmen. Did I mention they were Klansmen? Well, I think they were. And come to think of it, you could pass for black on the radio.

9. I described the Internet to you in eerie detail on June 8, 1977. I foretold of e-mail, websites, streaming video, and business-to-business applications. But my crusading work as a journalist and young congressman distracted me from personally realizing my vision.

10. Monica Lewinsky flashed her thong to me once, and I slapped her across the face.

I think I've covered all the bases, Rusty. But please, PLEASE, watch me on Tuesday night! I may do a little mix 'n' match and I want you to be ready!

Thanks,

Al

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Drug Courts: Can We Make Them More Effective?

In recent years, Drug Courts have become a popular, widely praised and rapidly expanding alternative for dealing with drug offenders and sometimes with people charged with nonviolent crimes who are drug users. Drug Courts are an evolving approach that substitutes mandatory treatment for incarceration. Because drug courts are new, much of the research on their effectiveness is recent, incomplete and inconclusive.

There are 700 Drug Courts in operation across the nation. Concerns about their fairness and effectiveness have been raised.

- ✔ *Providing coerced treatment, at a time when the needs for voluntary treatments are not being met, creates the strange circumstance of someone needing to get arrested to get treatment.*
- ✔ *People who are forced into treatment may not actually need it. They may just be people who use drugs in a non-problematic way who happened to get arrested.*
- ✔ *Drug Courts only rely on abstinence-based treatment. For example, methadone is not available to heroin addicts. In addition, they rely heavily on urine testing rather than focus on whether the person is succeeding in employment, education or family relationships.*
- ✔ *Drug Courts often mandate twelve-step treatment programs that some believe to be an infringement on religious freedom.*
- ✔ *Drug Courts invade the confidentiality of patient and health care provider. The health care provider's client is really the court, prosecutor and probation officer, rather than the person who is receiving drug treatment.*
- ✔ *Drug Courts are creating a separate system of justice for drug offenders not based on the time honored adversarial roles of defense attorney, prosecutor and judge. Therefore, a relapsed patient may end up with much harsher penalties than from a regular court.*
- ✔ *Drug Courts may result in more people being prosecuted than ever, thus expanding the harm caused by the drug laws.*

The intent to emphasize treatment is commendable. Let's work together to mitigate potential harm.

For more information, visit: http://www.csdp.org.
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HELP

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DAD... IS IT THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY'S FAULT THAT I'M EXPOSED TO THIS?
THAT'S NICE, SON.
SEX and VIOLENCE
SPORTS

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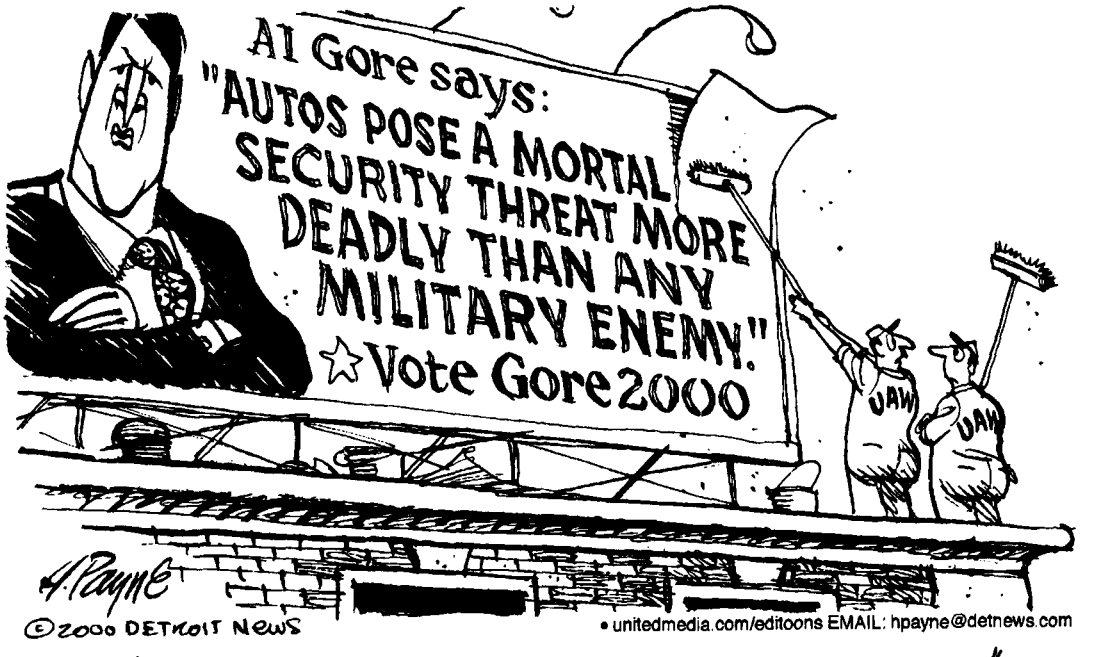
"Couldn't we at least wait till the upstate returns come in?"

Al's Wackos

In Michigan, they feed the birds,
But when environmental nerds
Bleat for the Arctic refuge, they
Make rude asides; while Al, at bay
In this most automotive state,
Begins to wobble, then deflate
Like Firestones about to blow.
Detroit could have an early snow.

—W. H. von Dreele



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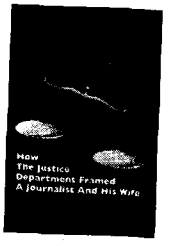

A blockbuster investigation of the TWA800 air disaster with compelling eyewitness, radar, rocket residue, and debris pattern evidence that TWA800 was brought down by missiles, not mechanical failure; evidence that the government knew this from the beginning. This 375-page book (with many photos) is a documented true life story of how many in the "news media," cozy with the government, are more than willing to look the other way.

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FBI officials claim the Branch Davidians and their children committed mass suicide. Since 1993, former members of the FBI, former Special Forces and CIA operatives have come forward with new evidence to suggest the FBI's claim is inaccurate. In the Spring of 1998, under the Freedom of Information Act, investigators from MGA Films became the first private citizens to gain access to the Waco investigation evidence lockers. What they found was shocking. Narrated by former FBI Special Agent Dr. Frederic Whitehurst, the film opens with aerial footage of the smoldering Davidian compound. The blackened rubble resembles a war zone; a somber voice declares, "my life would change forever as I came to know what failure means." The film contains: A brief history of the Waco tragedy, indexed by date and topic. An overview of the investigators, the investigation and the sources of evidence. A three part behind the scenes interview with Emmy Award winning Waco investigator Mike McNulty. What evidence was missing and what evidence was found in the government evidence lockers, and what was the Justice Department's reaction? News Briefs and articles following the Branch Davidian's wrongful death suit against the Federal government and the Justice Department's investigation into the 1993 siege of the Davidian compound.

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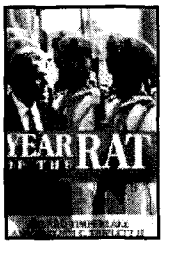
Year of the Rat

by William C. Triplett and Ed Timperlake



Written by Congressional investigators Ed Timperlake and William Triplett, **Year of the Rat** shows that in order to gain and hold on to power, the Clinton administration has acted recklessly, allowing the wrong people to gain access to our most important political and economic secrets. Any number of Chinese arms dealers, spies, narcotics traffickers, gangsters, pimps, accomplices to murder, communist agents, and other undesirables will appear in these pages, all associated in one way or another with the White House and money....

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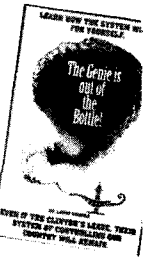
The Genie is Out of the Bottle!

By Larry Nichols



The Genie is Out of the Bottle is a book about a system that has gone bad. The situation has been brought to attention because it is the one Bill Clinton used to become President and is still using today. The system will continue to harm our nation even after Mr. Clinton leaves office. The system, as it was developed in Arkansas, is based on the theory that everyone has something to hide or a price at which they can be bought. By using these faults in human chara ter, the system as used by Clinton can control everyone and ever thing it comes in contact with. **The Genie is Out of the Bottle** is guide to how the system works and what can be done to stop it.

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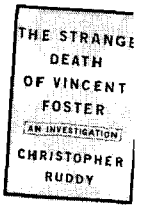

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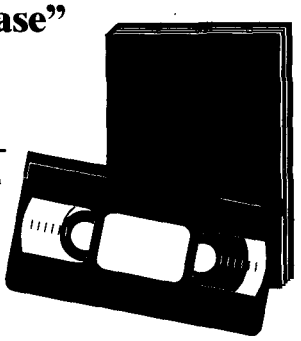

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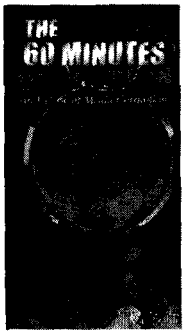

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Prophets and Kings

DANIEL P. MOLONEY

God's Name in Vain: The Wrongs and Rights of Religion in Politics, by Stephen L. Carter (Basic, 288 pp., $26)

STEPHEN CARTER used to irritate conservatives. In the early 1990s, Carter, a black professor at Yale Law School, wrote *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby*, in which he admitted that his status as an affirmative-action hire meant that others would always doubt his abilities as a professional, that he would be the object of resentment by those who did not qualify for affirmative-action programs, and that he would always know that such doubts and resentment were, at least partly, justified. Since this case had been advanced and refined for decades by conservatives, Carter proved his colors as a liberal by criticizing (and often caricaturing) the conservatives who had blazed the trail for him. His second book, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*, again addressed a controversial topic—the exclusion of religion from public life—with arguments developed by conservatives, but Carter was again at pains to distance himself from those on "the Christian Right": He took an entire chapter to accuse Pat Robertson and the Christian Coalition of engaging in "Religious Fascism." This triangulation strategy *avant la lettre* worked perfectly—President Clinton, early in his first term, would often mention the book in speeches.

That was the old Stephen Carter. In his new book, a sequel to *The Culture of Disbelief*, Carter comes out as a feisty, almost libertarian opponent of the secular state in nearly all of its manifestations. Carter now proudly identifies himself as an evangelical Christian, and, somewhat less proudly, declines to identify himself as a liberal. He apologizes for the "Religious Fascism" crack, and even admits to "a sneaking admiration for the Christian racists of Bob Jones University" for their steadfastness in the face of government pressure. If one examines the trajectory of Carter's books, from the overcautious liberal of *Reflections* to the bold antistatism of *God's Name in Vain*, it is clear that he has moved to the right. His political journey, though, is but a reluctant consequence of his growing conviction that all human actions, public and political as well as private, derive their meaning from man's relation to God.

Stephen L. Carter by David Smith

The timing of this book is flawless, coming as it does just after the spat regarding Sen. Joseph Lieberman's speeches on the importance of faith for public life. Carter's argument is that religious believers should engage in political debate, that they have every right to do so, and that if the state tries to prevent them it will meet with stiff resistance. "I write, not only as a Christian," Carter declares, "but as one who is far more devoted to the survival of my faith—and of religion generally—than to the survival of any state in particular, including the United States of America."

Carter wants believers to engage in—to quote one of his chapter headings—"politics, not elections." Religion is subversive, Carter insists, because it acknowledges a justice above human law. Thus, religious citizens have a vantage point from which to question the legitimacy of the regime, a vantage the regime does its best to compromise. Because believers passionately hold ideas about how all people should live, they are especially susceptible to the call of politics; they see how much good it can do, especially if the right sort of person is in charge.

If they want to preserve their distinctive perspective and contribution to public life, believers have to be on guard against this secular temptation, and, according to Carter, be especially careful about involvement in electoral politics. They should argue publicly for goals and principles inspired by their religious outlook, but they should "put not [their] faith in princes," as the psalm goes, by publicly supporting one side in partisan politics. Carter worries that the state will overawe and seduce believers, coopting religious language and symbols to dress up the bargaining with special interests and the spinning of the truth that is the stuff of political campaigns. Religion involves eternal truths, while politics involves prudential compromises; the impulse to win now can lead believers to betray their duty of eschatological witness.

Most observers point to the Christian Right when illustrating the perils of politicized religion, but Carter draws from examples of impeccably progressive

Mr. Moloney is associate editor of *First Things*.

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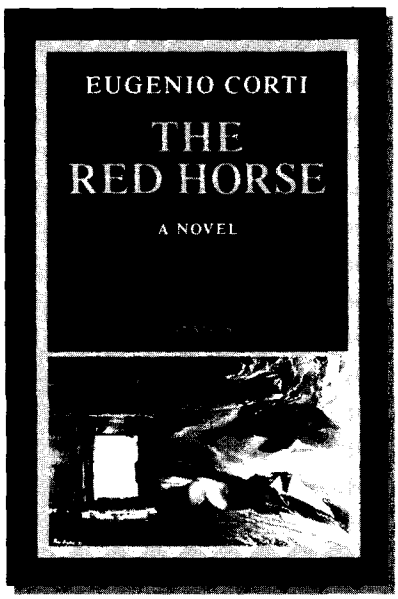

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religious activism, such as the civil-rights movement. For instance, he argues that black evangelical preachers have been corrupted by their involvement with the Democratic party, so that they persuade people who are basically pro-life, pro-vouchers, and pro-school prayer to vote for candidates who never take these views seriously. He reminds us that Martin Luther King Jr. presented a *religious* challenge to Americans—that they reform society based on the commandment to love one another—and that this subversive message was coopted and de-Christianized by the state in order to "invent affirmative action and buy people off."

The title of the book, Carter explains, was suggested (most proximately) by "Meditation on the Third Commandment," an essay by C. S. Lewis arguing against the foundation of a Christian political party in England. If such a party were actually Christian it would be too small and radical to get far in politics, Lewis argued, and if it were Christian only in name it would misrepresent Christianity as it entered into alliances with "un-Christian" parties to achieve its political ends. In seconding Lewis's concern, Carter wants believers to enter politics as the Biblical prophets did, calling our leaders to account in God's name. Anything less is to use God's name in vain.

Carter presents the conflict between church and state in near apocalyptic terms. The state is naturally totalitarian and worldly, a cunning beast always seeking to extend its dominion. Believers "at their best" are prophetic and otherworldly, but need to inhabit a "cocoon" or, in Roger Williams's metaphor, a "garden" protected from the "wilderness" (the worldly culture) by a "wall." A century later, Thomas Jefferson would write of a "wall of separation" between church and state, but Williams's metaphor better describes the Founders' intent, Carter thinks. (After all, it was the example of Williams's Rhode Island colony, the first to guarantee religious liberty and not have an established church, which ultimately inspired the First Amendment.) The last 50 years of American jurisprudence have seen this image turned on its ear, as if the Founders had really wanted to protect the unruly wilderness from the delicate order of the garden, the coercive state from the pious citizen. "No serious historian believes this," Carter observes exasperatedly. "The religion clause of the First Amendment is designed to limit what the state can do, not what the church can do."

Carter is especially effective in pointing out the absurdity, given the Founders' wishes, that today the wall is patrolled by the state. Through court decisions and the tax code, the government "doles out benefits to those churches that preach the right messages, and denies benefits to churches that preach the wrong ones." Thus the federal government has considered revoking the tax-exempt status of the Catholic Church for fighting abortion and that of conservative Christian groups for endorsing candidates or distributing voter guides, while in African-American churches these commonplace activities go unchallenged. According to Carter, this is "the stuff of the old Communist empire."

The problem is with what Carter calls our "statism": our tendency, when discussing religious freedom, always to focus on the state and its needs. The idea of religious neutrality treats believers as just another special-interest group because, in effect, it ignores their religion—so that Episcopalians, who are rich and well-connected, feel little pressure from the state, while Native American religions are frequently harassed by allegedly neutral legislation. Attempting to improve this situation, many legal theorists have advanced the doctrine that when passing a law the state should accommodate religious beliefs and practices unless they conflict with a "compelling state interest." The first problem with this is that the state (in the person of a judge) arbitrarily decides what is "compelling"; the second is that even when the interest of the believer is clear, the state's interest always prevails.

This asymmetry leads Carter to oppose the "poison" of statism in many forms. For example, he criticizes compulsory public education for removing a child from the family context, where religion is taught, and placing him in a new moral environment approved by the state. He also reminds us that the current public-school year, in which children spend the vast majority of time away from home, was the outcome of a 19th-century movement by "nativist Protestants" to "Americanize" the children of Catholic immigrants, which meant ridding them of their Catholicism.

Carter emerges as a passionate defender of religion in the broadest sense, vigorously refuting those who advocate the culture of disbelief. Yet in the end there is something unsatisfying about his portrayal of the culture of belief, which shows only one side of the believer's relationship with the world.

For Carter, religion is always outside of society, never inside building it up. It is always prophetic, like John the Baptist in the desert, calling those in the world to remember their duty to God. The believer is always wrong to get involved in the realm of political give-and-take. Carter never envisions him engaged in civil society, trying to change the culture by changing the people and institutions that create culture. This smacks of the separatist evangelicalism of yesteryear, before *Roe* v. *Wade* and the culture wars awakened conservative Christians to the consequences of political disengagement. Carter often forgets that in a democracy the state and the church have substantially overlapping membership—we are churchgoers *and* citizens, prophets *and* kings.

Carter follows Roger Williams in depicting religion as a thing apart, when its true nature is to be in the thick of things, preaching in the worldly cities, accommodating any custom or belief not incompatible with its transcendent vision. It would be a shame if this theological error were to lead Carter to turn down an appointment to the judiciary, for example, where he could do much good. It would be a disaster if his arguments were to persuade other religious citizens that civic engagement puts their souls at risk.

Nonetheless, such a concern is not reason enough to end on a negative note. *God's Name in Vain* is as intelligent and compelling a defense of faith in public life as has been written in some time. It has an edge, missing from Carter's earlier works, that makes for engaging reading; one hopes that this new Carter is here to stay. **NR**

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Leninism in Hanoi

JOHN DERBYSHIRE

Ho Chi Minh, by William J. Duiker (Hyperion, 720 pp., $35)

ONE of the great moving forces of the world in the early 20th century was the resentment felt by Asians towards those European powers that had seized their territories. Intelligent young people from these old, proud countries seethed with rage at the *effrontery* of the white men. The other side of this anger was shame—shame that one's culture had proved too feeble, one's countrymen too supine, to resist the alien onslaught.

Those young Asians who set out to right the wrong had two things on their minds: to expel the foreigners, and to reform their own societies. Both intentions were summed up in the slogan of the May Fourth movement in Peking, 1919: *Da dao lie qiang! Zhen xing Zhong Hua!*—"Down with the great powers! Strengthen the nation!" Both were liable to curdle: the first into xenophobia, the second into a cruel contempt for one's own people.

This was the intellectual and political environment in which Ho Chi Minh grew up. Born in 1890 to a family of scholar-gentry in French Indo-China, Ho's actual surname was Nguyen. He went through a great many pseudonyms in his career, settling decisively on "Ho Chi Minh" only in 1940.

For Americans, Ho is principally associated with the war that bears his country's name. From this point of view, William Duiker's biography of Ho must be regarded as deep background. The U.S. Marines do not come ashore at Da Nang until page 543 of his 580-page main narrative. This is properly to scale: By 1965, Ho was pretty much out of things—a revered figurehead, but no longer much of a decision-maker. He died four years later.

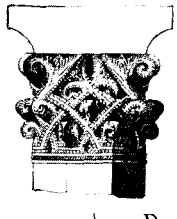
Ho was never, in fact, a total dictator like Stalin, Mao, or Castro. He actually declined the post of General Secretary of his party in 1941 and seems, by Duiker's account, to have been wary of assuming too central a position in affairs, perhaps as a result of having witnessed Stalin's terror at first hand. Communism is a horrible, inhuman business, and the sufferings of the Vietnamese people under Ho's party should not be understated; but as Leninist regimes go, the Vietnamese was one of the milder varieties. Central decision-making was always collegial, and senior figures who found themselves on the wrong side of the party line, like the odious Truong Chinh, rarely suffered more than demotion. There were no mass purges in the manner of Stalin, few gangsterish intrigues of the Castro style, and no quasi-religious-leader cults like Mao's.

■

In Lenin's 'Theses,' Ho found his license to be a nationalist as well as a socialist.

■

Ho left his homeland in 1911, returning 30 years later as a seasoned revolutionary. Those years included long sojourns in China and the USSR., shorter ones in France, England, and the U.S. He was already a patriot and an anti-imperialist at the time he went abroad, but his positive ideas were inchoate. The formative event of his life was reading Lenin's "Theses on the National and Colonial Questions" in July 1920. Here he found the strategies that were to guide him to the very end.



Lenin approved of nationalism as a permissible tactic for colonial peoples, and argued—erroneously, of course—that capitalism survived past the date Marx had set for its demise only by exploiting overseas colonies. He thus provided Asian intellectuals with answers to their two great questions. How to get rid of the foreigners? By temporarily cooperating with bourgeois nationalist groups, while preserving one's separate, Communist, identity. How to reform one's own society so that such humiliations could never recur? By proceeding to socialism via class warfare. The second of these prescriptions was, of course, horribly mistaken. Where applied, it let loose a flood of human misery, and resulted at last in corrupt and cynical kleptocracies like the ones that rule China, Vietnam, and North Korea today. This, however, is hindsight; it all seemed perfectly logical in 1920.

It is in his seduction by Lenin's "Theses" that we find the answer to the question most often asked about Ho: Was he more of a nationalist or a Communist? To the very end of his life—for example, in his advice on dealing with the Diem government of South Vietnam in the 1960s—he held firm to Lenin's strategy: First, expel the foreigners and unify the country; then set about building socialism in earnest. Ho was a convinced Leninist; but it was in the "Theses" that he found his license to be a nationalist as well as a socialist. It was nationalism, not socialism, that really engaged his emotions. Hard to blame him; I wouldn't want to be ruled by Frenchmen, either.

Although Ho occasionally expressed himself in Leninist diction (e.g., in 1946: "All those who do not follow the line that I have set out will be smashed"), Duiker's account suggests that Ho resorted to the more severe Leninist methods with an ill conscience. How convincing is this? My own impression after reading this book is closest to the one voiced by James O'Sullivan, the U.S. consul in Hanoi immediately after World War II, who described him as "a very shifty character."

Be that as it may, Ho kept his position as leader of his country's Communists by dogged adherence to the principles he had first absorbed in 1920. (Though also, it must be said, by luck: He was out of Vietnam on all of the many occasions when the French police did a sweep of radical patriots. As Duiker rather delicately puts it, "He was an unwitting beneficiary of the thoroughness of the Sûreté.") Whenever considerations of pure ideology came into conflict with

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the great project of expelling the foreigners and unifying the nation, ideology was set aside. In Duiker's words: "There seems little doubt that for Ho Chi Minh the survival of his country was first and always his primary concern. Indeed, such views aroused the suspicion of other senior Party leaders in Hanoi, Beijing and Moscow, who sometimes questioned whether Ho was a genuine Marxist."

This presumably accounts for the way Ho was treated by Stalin and Mao. When Ho visited Moscow in 1950,

■

Ho seems to have had very little personal life. He used women briefly, then wandered off to make more revolution.

■

Stalin's attitude to his guest was, according to Khrushchev, "offensive" and "infuriating." Mao was very little better. Having convinced himself that war with the U.S. was inevitable and might break out anywhere on China's borders, Mao looked on Vietnam as a useful buffer state, another Korea. Ho returned the slight, regarding the Chinese with great wariness; one of the constant themes of Vietnam's history has been resistance to Chinese domination.

Ho's colleagues, however, were deeply impressed by the success of the Communists in China, and at their Third National Conference in 1950 swung away from Ho's long-standing policy of putting national unification first. Campaigns were launched to introduce the "masses" to the ideas and practices of Maoism—"class struggle" and so on. This conference was held in Ho's absence, probably because of growing doubts both in the international movement and among his own colleagues about Ho's commitment to Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Ho never again had supremacy in his politburo. He was too much the elder statesman of Vietnamese Communism to be set aside, though, and his influence actually may have softened some of the social policies embarked on in the 1950s—the savage "land reform" campaigns of 1955, for example, which were also carried out under the poisonous influence of Chinese advisers.

Duiker was a foreign-service officer in Saigon during the Vietnam war, and thereafter taught history at Penn State. His book has been 30 years in the making, and is a monument to diligent research. From the evidence he has presented, his inferences seem to me logically sound. On areas in which I have some specialist knowledge, however, Duiker sometimes left me feeling mildly uneasy. It is, for example, odd to see Osip Mandelstam referred to (twice) as "a journalist" and the Chinese essayist Lu Xun as "a poet." Mandelstam did some reporting and Lu wrote some verses, but that is not what either is remembered for. Nor does the Chinese word *tao* mean "apple"; it means "peach" . . . and so on.

The style of the book, too, is very dry, almost bereft of humor or anecdote. The first half is a chronicle of seedy revolutionary activism—changes of name, squalid lodgings, factional bickering, and tiny-circulation radical journalism—that leaves the impression that being a revolutionary is much less fun than being a bus driver. Matters only really get off the ground after 1945, when the fantastic complexity of events in liberated Vietnam demands a reader's full attention. At this point the dramatis personae included at least five major nationalist and religious sects, three factions of Vietminh, and a powerful crime syndicate, not to mention five different sets of foreigners: the Japanese, the French, the O.S.S., the British (in the South), and the Chinese (in the North). Nobody would dare write a novel this involved.

In true Leninist style, Ho seems to have had very little personal life. He used women briefly, then wandered off to make more revolution. He wrote almost nothing but party tracts and some didactic verse. It is very difficult to get much feel for the man, and a relentlessly factual style like Duiker's does not help. Simply as a chronicle of Ho's career, however, I do not see how this book could be surpassed. **NR**

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A Theft of Style

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

The Question of Bruno, by Aleksandar Hemon (Doubleday, 240 pp., $22.95)

IMAGINE you are handed a work entitled "The Transformation," written by a young Czech author who has immigrated to the United States. The story is an account of an obscure man, Jakob H., who awakens one morning to find that during the night he has been transformed into a giant firefly.

Most literate Westerners would politely inform the aspiring author that an obvious ripoff of Kafka's "Metamorphosis" is not the best way to launch one's career. Alternatively, given that almost all authors go through a period of mimicry, you might charitably conclude that the young man is still in the sophomoric stage of his development, and some day will find his own voice.

But suppose that the young immigrant's work has been issued by a major publisher who showers him with money, and that he is unanimously hailed as a new Nabokov or Conrad who has miraculously broken through to literary greatness in an adopted tongue. Imagine further that virtually none of the critics who fall all over themselves to praise the young author seems to have ever heard of Kafka, but take the entire production as fresh and new.

Something like this has occurred with regard to Aleksandar Hemon, a Bosnian writer in his mid 30s who arrived in Chicago just prior to the outbreak of the Bosnian war in 1992. In *The Question of Bruno*, Hemon has produced a first volume of narratives that is, in its essential part, a pure and simple imitation of the outstanding Yugoslav author Danilo Kiš. Nor is this a matter of mere influence or

Mr. Schwartz is a writer living in Sarajevo, where he contributes to the local press. His new book, *Intellectuals and Assassins*, will be published this month in Britain.

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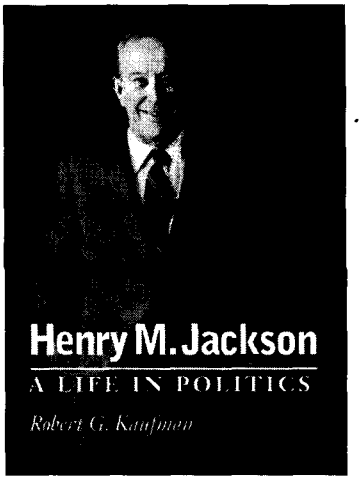

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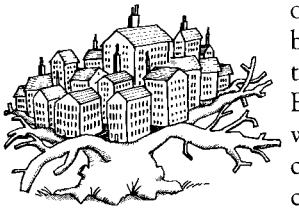
mentoring. Hemon has clearly set out to replicate the style and themes of Kiš, on the apparently safe assumption that British and American readers will not recognize the imposture.

An imposture it certainly is. Hemon's literary expropriation is so bold as to constitute an unethical act. Not a plagiarism, per se, but something very close: a theft of style.

The London publisher Picador reportedly paid $250,000 for this collection of pastiches and immigrant sketches, which would not have done credit to a college freshman. The book has been released here by Doubleday, a highly reputable publisher, and has achieved remarkable critical success.

Novelist Amy Tan, who can hardly be blamed for knowing nothing about East European literature, composed a blurb declaring, "Aleksandar Hemon is a striking new voice in fiction. I admire his work tremendously." Susan Horsburgh babbled delightedly in the international edition of *Time* magazine that Hemon "freely marries history with fiction," which happened to be the exact modus operandi of Kiš. Novelist George Packer, in *Salon*, described Hemon's "casual, almost whimsical crisscrossing of grand history and personal story so that they mirror and mock each other" as if it were a novelty. Writing in the *New York Times* Book Review, Richard Eder referred to one of Hemon's most obvious imitations as "literary miracle-working."

Hemon's posthumous victim, Danilo Kiš (1935–89), a Yugoslav author of mixed Serbian and Hungarian Jewish background, is unquestionably the greatest of his country's recent writers, particularly in terms of world acceptance. His work was significantly promoted in the U.S. by no less than Susan Sontag. Nearly all of his books—including *A Tomb for Boris Davidovich*, *The Encyclopedia of the Dead*, *Hourglass*, and *Garden, Ashes*—are in print in English, which makes Hemon's appropriation—and the gullibility of the Western literary establishment—all the more outrageous.



It has become a commonplace to compare Kiš, now considered one of the European literary immortals, with Borges, in his mixture of personal and public history, political and esoteric knowledge. Indeed, he is probably the only European whose work bears legitimate comparison with the Argentine genius, and in some respects he was even greater.

But Kiš was more than a mere man of letters. His family is symbolic of recent Balkan history. Kiš was born not long before a massacre of Jews and Serbs by Hungarian Nazis in the Vojvodina area of northern Serbia. Kiš himself saw the bodies of the dead lying in the street. His father died in Auschwitz in 1944. His mother's Serb Orthodox (i.e., Christian) identity provided a cover for the rest of the family's survival, but they fled to the Hungarian countryside and did not return to Yugoslavia until years after the war.

Kiš became a major dissident figure in the late Tito era, persecuted by the cultural bureaucrats in Belgrade—a fact that may have significantly contributed to his early death. He also developed a second career in France. He is still worshiped by thousands, if not millions of young intellectuals in the countries that succeeded the former Yugoslav state. Indeed, admiration for him is so ubiquitous in that part of the world that when I complained about Hemon to one Sarajevo journalist, he shrugged: "Everyone here has published an imitation of Kiš."

Yes, but not all of them have been rewarded by a fat advance and acclaim in the West as a budding Nabokov. Most outrageously, Hemon has been hailed for his breakthrough talent in writing English, the language in which many Anglo-American critics presumed he composed *The Question of Bruno*, when the book is mainly a translation of Hemon's 1997 volume, *The Life and Work of Alphonse Kauders*, published in Bosnian in Sarajevo. Did Picador or Doubleday have any idea that they were paying so much money for, in effect, a translation of an obscure Bosnian work?

Hemon's appropriation is so exact that one can match his imitative tales to their originals with very little effort. Kiš invented a kind of "tragic Zelig" genre. That is, as in the film by Woody Allen, Kiš composed narratives in which invented, semianonymous witnesses convey to us the basic human feelings behind the great and often horrifying dramas of history. But Zelig made us all laugh, while in most cases Kiš can make us weep; by contrast, Hemon can only elicit a shrug.

For example, Kiš's most famous story, "A Tomb for Boris Davidovich," for which the novel of the same title is named, spins out the tale of a forgotten Bolshevik revolutionary found at every climactic moment of the Russian insurrectionary struggle: leading a union of Jewish workers here, making bombs there, being toasted at his wedding by the sailors on a Red gunboat fighting in the Russian civil war, and finally perishing emblematically in the Gulag.

Similarly, in one of his most glaring examples of appropriation, the story "The Sorge Spy Ring," included in *The Question of Bruno*, Hemon melds his fantasies during his Yugoslav childhood—about his own father, a much more banal figure than the murdered parent of Kiš—with the biography of the Russian spy Richard Sorge. It is as if Hemon wishes to slip into the personality of Kiš,

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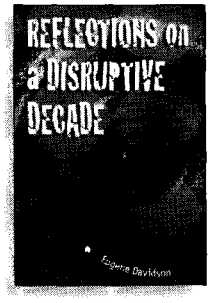

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who commented in an interview that in his book *Garden, Ashes* "it's a matter of metaphor, of the awe a child has for his father. His father is always greater."

But Hemon's version is an obvious ripoff, to put it indelicately, of "A Tomb for Boris Davidovich." Hemon substitutes the mystery and glamour of a Stalinist agent operating in pre-1941 Japan for the life of the romantic conspirator immolated by the Bolshevik revolution. There is a major difference, however, and it is a moral one, of which Hemon seems shockingly unaware. Kiš, tormented beyond measure by the horrors of his childhood, wrote of Jewish religious scholars martyred in the pyres of anti-Semitism, Irish volunteers in the Spanish Civil War who end up in the Gulag, and Bolshevik pioneers tortured in the same system of imprisonment and exile. In Kiš there is always the presence of an immense tragedy, in which lives were lost or dreadfully twisted by the cruelties of history. In Hemon, we have merely a reflection of these dramas, secondhand, in the narcissism of a postmodernist youth.

Hemon's offense is not his self-insertion in the narrative, which is common enough these days, but that he does not see the difference between the career of a mercenary Stalinist spy and the struggles of a generation of idealistic rebels who sacrificed their lives in the vortex of great social and political changes. For Hemon, Hitler and his cronies are merely a subject for amusement. Kiš understood that a profound pain and existential horror made the destinies of life and intellect in a place like Yugoslavia wholly different from their parallels in Paris, New York, or California. Hemon commutes idly between the two worlds.

In the interviews he gives here, there, and everywhere, Hemon never manages to mention Kiš as a model or even an influence. Rather, he speaks of his debt to J. D. Salinger, Raymond Carver, Cynthia Ozick, Donald Barthelme, John Barth, Bret Easton Ellis, and even Jay McInerney. Although he was spared the horrors of the Bosnian war, in publicity photographs Hemon is shown looking over his shoulder in anxiety, as if he anticipates that someone will, in the end, find him out. As well he should. **NR**

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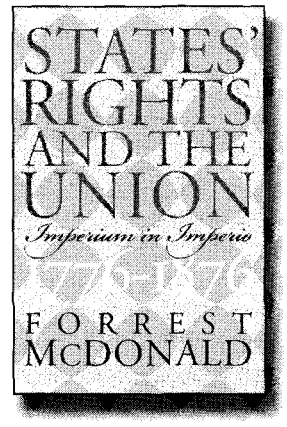

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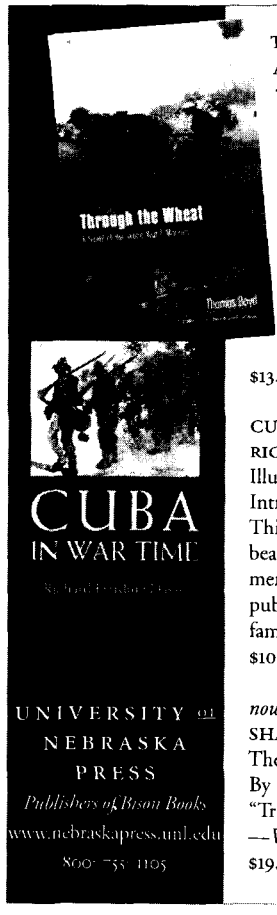

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Book of Books

DAVID KLINGHOFFER

The Modern Jewish Canon: A Journey Through Language and Culture, by Ruth R. Wisse (Free Press, 395 pp., $28)

THE idea that there exists such a thing as a "canon" of greatest books pops up regularly for debate. Like mold spores that take to the air at this season each year and torment the allergic, the "canon" makes liberals sneeze every time.

Probably what offends lefties about canons is the same thing that bothers them whenever anyone suggests there's a transcendent Truth out there to be discovered. A list of greatest books assumes that it's possible to say, definitively and once and for all, that *these* books matter while these *other* books don't really matter, at least not as much. The notion that in a given field of endeavor there is a "best," an "ultimate," whether in books or paintings or anything more serious than best Mexican restaurant or best supporting actress, has about it a faint scent of theology, which is the study of the Ultimate. I suspect that this is the main allergen for liberals in the debate about canons. That's why the canon they find most problematic is also the ultimate, and historically earliest, one in Western literature: the books that make up the Bible.

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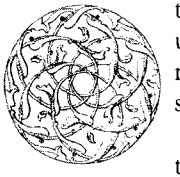
The Bible is just the right "book" to take as a model when you're trying to identify the canonical works in a given national literature. For it both is and isn't a book. From one perspective, it is a collection of books. But read together, its components tell a story, from Genesis to Kings to Isaiah and onward. As Ruth Wisse shrewdly discerns, telling such a story is an overlooked but key characteristic of a literary canon. Wisse sets out to define the canon of modern Jewish novels, which if read together also tell a story.

Wisse is just the right woman for this job. Readers of *Commentary* magazine will know her passionate articles on Middle Eastern affairs, focusing on the perpetually endangered state of Israel. It would be hard to think of a more enthusiastic Zionist than Ruth Wisse—at least one who has chosen to remain in America. Currently Professor of Yiddish Literature at Harvard, for many years she taught at McGill, where she trained a generation of Yiddishists. She is one of the heaviest hitters among conservative scholars and critics, a rare species at Harvard. When Wisse goes to work on a subject you expect controversy, and in this book she doesn't let us down. Allergic liberals will be reaching for their tissues—as will non-Zionist Jews.



For apart from the troubling concept of canonicity there is the question of what story the Jewish canon actually tells. Asking this question of any canon often leads to disputes. Jews and Christians see very different narrative lines in the Hebrew Bible, for example. In the unfolding of Jewish fiction over the past century, Wisse discerns a narrative progression from religious orthodoxy to rebellion, from anti-Jewish victimization to what she believes is the culminating event of Jewish history: a Zionist state in the land of Israel. Explaining her principle of inclusion, she writes, "I have tried to include in the Jewish canon the works that tell the story best."

Mr. Klinghoffer is a contributing editor of NATIONAL REVIEW and the author of *The Lord Will Gather Me In: My Journey to Jewish Orthodoxy*. He is writing a biography of the patriarch Abraham.

The canon begins with Sholem Aleichem, whose stories of Tevye the Dairyman were conceived in 1894 and later turned into that unfortunate musical and movie *Fiddler on the Roof*, a masterpiece of covert anti-Semitism (despite its having been written by Jews) that portrays the Jewish religion as mindless sentimentalism. For Wisse, Tevye represents a faith incapable of defending itself against modernity. When questioned by his skeptical daughter, who wants to know why he believes what he does, Sholem Aleichem's pious Tevye splutters, "Look here, if you're going to ask why, why, why all the time, we'll just keep going around in circles." "Tevye offers not a single reason for why Jews should remain a people apart," Wisse notes.

Her canon traces the alienation of many Jews from their ancestral faith earlier in the 20th century. In his disturbing novel *Satan in Goray* (1935), about the disastrous impact of false messianism on a 17th-century Polish Jewish settlement, I. B. Singer "invites us to see how relatively puny and emotionally unsatisfying are the resources of rabbinism . . . in the face of the strongest human passions."

It's true that for a time something went wrong in the culture of traditional Judaism. The rabbis ceased to ignite the passions of their followers, with the result that Jews began to feel oppressed by the demands of their religion. Many saw collective salvation, and an escape from Judaism, in politics. First their hopes were directed to the liberalism of enlightened European governments. Long before Hitler, this hope was disappointed. When it failed altogether, the expectations of many turned to Zionism.

For Wisse, the book at the center of the canon alludes to this transition from one hope to the next: S. Y. Agnon's *A Guest for the Night* (1939), about a Jew who has moved to Palestine but in the years between the world wars makes a return trip to his Polish hometown. There he seeks to rouse other Jews to join him back in the Levant. For as Wisse puts it, "to cease being a guest [in a gentile land] one must have a house of one's own."

Zionist dreams are the thread that connects all the dots, and as the canon

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unfolds Wisse keep us informed about just what was going on in the dawning Zionist movement. Thus she observes that Sholem Aleichem's creation of Tevye coincided with Theodor Herzl's creation of *Altneuland*, "the utopian fantasy of a people trying to regain its sovereignty." Even *Ulysses* is seen from a Zionist perspective. (Joyce, who felt warmly toward his half-Jewish protagonist, Bloom, seems to have been unenthusiastic about Jews immigrating to Palestine.)

Not that Wisse is unsubtle in her Zionism. The last book she deals with, a 1977 Israeli novel about depressed Tel Avivans, hardly affirms the triumph of the dream of paradisiacal glowing orange groves and hardy, happy pioneers.

In fact, though her academic prose style is at times impenetrable, Wisse has inside her the powers of a superb literary critic. Her explication of what's really going on in *Satan in Goray*, or in Saul Bellow's *Mr. Sammler's Planet* (1970), are models of lucidity. Singer, she explains, sought to establish that "moral life" is an "either/or" proposition, that there is "no moral ground between disciplining religion and wantonness." Hence the book's apocalyptic showdown between the town's old rabbi and the new messianists. Bellow's Mr. Sammler, a distinguished elderly Polish refugee, represents the writer's or the critic's impotence. He can point to the deterioration of the society around him. But he "has acquired his wisdom too late and at too great a distance to be able to repair what he deplores"—a sensation which modern political conservatives will understand all too well.

Occasionally her passion for a writer you never heard of—like the Canadian A. M. Klein—makes you want to discover him for yourself. The Zionist daydreams of Klein's protagonist, in the 1951 novel *The Second Scroll*, are stirring, even if you don't share his political inclination:

> When as a young boy, the consolations and prophecies of Isaiah before me, I dreamed in the dingy Hebrew school the apocalyptic dream of a renewed Zion, always I imagined it as coming to pass thus: First I heard the roar and thunder of the battle of Gog and Magog; then, as silence fell, I saw through my mind's eye a great black aftermath cloud filling the heavens across the whole length of the humped horizon. The cloud then began to scatter, to be diminished, to subside, until revealed there shone the glory of a burnished dome—Hierosolyma [Jerusalem in Latin] the golden!

Wisse's passion for literature sometimes embarrassed me: By now I really should have read Philip Roth's *American Pastoral* (1997), evidence that Roth is going conservative in his old age, not to mention George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876), the "Zionist classic" about a young Englishman who discovers he's Jewish by birth (a subject of personal interest).

But the passion of Ruth Wisse is above all for politics, and this brings us to the other defining characteristic of a canon. Political causes are evanescent, while a canon, besides telling a story, is supposed to be timeless. If a collection of books tells a story of permanent interest, then it has canon-potential. Zionism is an ideology that served an historical purpose but that today is on the decline even among Israelis, many of whom see it as a relic of the founding generation. And as Israel becomes more and more a country like any other, Wisse's Israel-centered view of Jewish history grows harder to accept.

This doesn't mean that modern Jewish fiction lacks a timeless theme. Zionism is part of the story, certainly, and has been a motif in the Jewish experience over the past century. But it is not a permanent theme. I'd suggest that the "master narrative," to use Ruth Wisse's own phrase, is not the march to Zion so much as it is the spiritual evolution that crystallized on her last page: "In the modern period, the God-intoxicated Jews became intoxicated with the world, and the result of their creative experimentation is registered in the diversity of this book."

Jewish experimentation with alternatives to faith is nothing new. Zionism was one experiment, liberalism another. A very old rabbinic formulation portrays Jewish history as "*yeridah ha'dorot*" —a descent in holiness from one generation to the next as the memory of Sinai fades. This process will be reversed only at the end of days. Till then, salvation comes the old-fashioned way: not to the nation but to the individual. For further information, see the original Canon. **NR**

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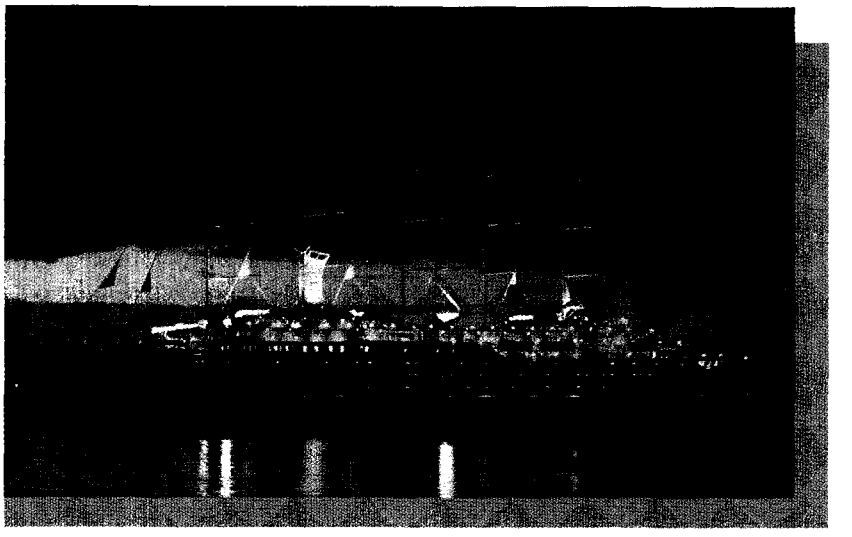

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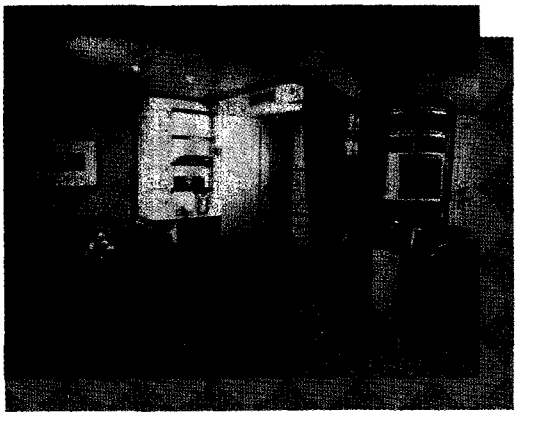

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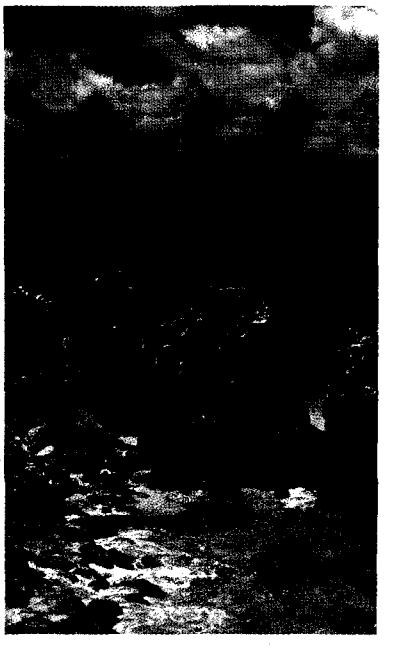

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NEVIS, LEEWARD ISLANDS. Nevis is an almost-perfect volcanic cone rising up from the sea and covered with bougainvillea, hibiscus, and many other lush tropical plants. For a time we'll be anchoring outside of Charlestown, the island's capital, for those who wish to go ashore on tours or on their own, then repositioning to a nearby idyllic beach for an afternoon of watersports, sunning, and a festive beach barbecue.

PIGEON ISLAND, ST LUCIA, WINDWARD ISLANDS. The Pitons, two volcanic peaks rising to more than 2,400 feet, mark St. Lucia, an island of lush green valleys, banana plantations, and bubbling sulfur springs. Some 24 miles of vibrant reef make it a haven for divers and snorkelers. Pigeon Island National Park, connected to the mainland by a causeway, was once a pirates' hideaway. Today, impressive ruins of old English forts, archaeological relics of Arawak Indians, and splendid beaches make this a fascinating place to explore.

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Dec. 12 (Tue.)	Nevis, 8AM–5PM	Late-night smoker (post-dinner)
Dec. 13 (Wed.)	St Martin, 8AM–1AM	Morning Seminar
Dec. 14 (Thur.)	St Barthelemy, 8AM–5PM	Morning Seminar
Dec. 15 (Fri.)	Iles des Saintes, 8AM–5PM	Afternoon Seminar, Late-night smoker (post-dinner)
Dec. 16 (Sat.)	Pigeon Island, 7AM–4PM	Afternoon Seminar, Cocktail Reception (pre-dinner)
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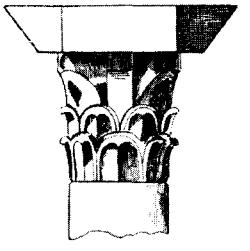
■ FILM ■

Improprieties

JOHN SIMON

THE subject of the fine new American film *The Contender* is not just politics but also dirty politics, assuming that those are separate categories. It concerns the decision of a president to fill a sudden vice-presidential vacancy not with a seemingly ideal southern candidate, Gov. Jack Hathaway, but with a woman, Sen. Laine Hanson of Ohio. Hathaway seems to have risked considerable danger trying (unsuccessfully) to save a woman from drowning, and has become a national hero, yet President Jackson Evans politely passes him over in favor of Mrs. Hanson. This gets up the dander of Evans's old political rival, Rep. Sheldon "Shelly" Runyon. Though he has nothing against Hanson—except perhaps male chauvinism—Runyon determines to humiliate the outgoing Evans, whose swan song, as he says, this appointment would be.

So Runyon, heading the congressional committee that must approve of Hanson, encourages the committee to trip her up. He digs up some photographs ostensibly showing Hanson, as a college freshman, participating in a frat-house orgy with two men, and also rounds up some eyewitnesses to authenticate those pictures, and more. What follows is a kind of witch hunt we have seen in politics, wherein the media gleefully participate, but which Evans and his team—some with conviction, some without—endeavor to foil.



What makes it easier for Runyon and harder for Evans is that Hanson, a dignified wife and mother, refuses to discuss the matter before the committee; she considers the charges irrelevant and, whether true or untrue, of only private concern. Even when Runyon keeps scratching up more and more disgusting—and often preposterous—charges against Hanson, she not only refuses to defend herself, she also puts on the table all her political positions, some of them bound to make her unpopular with anyone right of center. She comports herself with exemplary dignity and composure in the face of powerful mudslinging, and when handed effective but private ammunition against Runyon, will not stoop to his level by using it.

This is a spellbinding movie whether you are into politics or not, and whether you agree with all of the things it stands for or not. Although Rod Lurie's script and direction espouse some liberal values, the film is not about liberals versus conservatives, Democrats versus Republicans, good guys versus bad guys.

■

The Contender is a spellbinding movie whether you agree with all of the things it stands for or not.

■

Still less is it, as some will undoubtedly suggest, some sort of apology for Bill Clinton—quite the contrary. Rather, the film sees gray areas in good people and humanity in not-so-good ones, but believes in the ultimate decency of humankind.

Lurie, who is among other things a former film critic, writes savvily and pungently, and directs with a thrilling sense of rhythm, contrasting moods, and economy. He writes short, snappy scenes that make their point but do not condescend or overexplain. Even his minor characters are well thought out, unschematic, and unpredictable. They have their little quirks, such as the president's trying to come up with requests that will stump his kitchen staff (even the most complicated ones don't; only Munster cheese finally does). The dialogue is always clever, often witty, but not at the expense of an underlying seriousness. It is a fully grown-up film, a rarity in today's (or indeed any day's) Hollywood. Perhaps it also helps that it was shot entirely in Virginia.

There is splendid acting from everyone. Probably the most impressive performance—partly because it allows for the greatest range—comes from Gary

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Oldman as Runyon. No one would think the English actor not a native of Illinois; or this balding, scraggly-haired, thickly bespectacled person a former leading man. His basically unlikable character is played with charismatic passion, imposing even in misguidedness and gross misbehavior.

That formidable actress Joan Allen, in turn, achieves something very difficult. Even though her role, at times, comes perilously close to saintliness, she always infuses Hanson with flesh-and-blood sturdiness that has no truck with plaster sainthood. There is refinement and incisiveness in everything she does or utters, and you root for her deservedly and wholeheartedly. Jeff Bridges, an invariably solid actor, gives one of his most engagingly manifold performances as Evans: a cannily smooth politician, yet also an idiosyncratic creature exuding the earthy smell of humanity.

The supporting roles lag not a whit behind: Christian Slater, as a naïve young congressman who grows up; Sam Elliott, as the president's cynical chief of staff who mellows; Mariel Hemingway, as a former friend uneasily testifying against Hanson; Kathryn Morris, as a pawky FBI agent; and a number of others.

The ending strikes me as a bit too upbeat. I doubt whether good in Washington triumphs so unequivocally, and whether the somewhat rah-rah rosiness isn't too deep a bow to the box office. But after so much good stuff, it can be forgiven, especially when presented with such skill and taste.

■ In Denmark, the aristocratic prefix (*de* in French, *von* in German) does not exist. The bungling uxoricide Claus Bülow illicitly turned himself into von Bülow; the phony filmmaker Lars Trier elevated himself into von Trier. Anecdotes about his weirdness abound; weirder still is his major reputation, based on a series of pretentious, preposterous, downright demented movies and his espousal of the ludicrous Dogma 95, a "vow of chastity" whereby some Danish filmmakers forswore all allegedly artificial practices (no stage lighting, for example, and no musical soundtrack). Trier's current film, ***Dancer in the Dark***, features galumphing musical numbers filmed on 100 strategically stationed digital video cameras, a sterling display of chastity.

The movie—for which Trier was writer, director, and cameraman—was filmed in Sweden but takes place in rural America, where he has never been because of his fear of flying. But the topographical and related inauthenticities are the least of his problems. There is inane pretentiousness from the very beginning, when the screen wallows in cavorting abstractions while the soundtrack offers a lengthy and grandiose "Overture" by Björk, the Icelandic pop singer, who, besides starring, composed all the monotonously dreary music, lugubriously orchestrated and seemingly emerging from a deep (though not deep enough) cave.

The story is a blatant, tearjerking melodrama that would have made D. W. Griffith blush. Selma (Björk), a hard-working Czech immigrant to Washington State, is going blind of some unnamed illness (beware of movies with unnamed illnesses), which also threatens her young son. Though she can no longer properly see the dangerous machinery at which she toils by day, she signs up for the night shift as well to scrounge together the money for a costly eye operation for her boy. A troubled cop steals the money, which Selma keeps in a shoebox (no banks in America?), and as she struggles to wrest it back from him, he is killed with his own gun. Despite some good friends' efforts to hire a decent defense lawyer for her, Selma refuses to spend the operation money on a lawyer, and prefers—with all kinds of vile people ganging up on her—to hang instead.

As if that weren't enough, the locals are putting on an amateur production of *The Sound of Music*, in which Selma's near-blindness forces her to relinquish the role of Maria. But never mind: She has numerous fantasies, right up to the gallows, to beautify her life. They consist of would-be infectious Busby Berkeley-ish musical numbers, even more ineptly staged than the rest of the film. Catherine Deneuve is absurdly cast as a drab factory worker, and the lyrics to Björk's songs, co-written by Trier, are inept. My favorite one accompanies Selma on the 107 steps from the death-row cell to the gallows. The lyrics are the numbers 1 to 107. **NR**

The Crime Drop in America

Alfred Blumstein *and* ***Joel Wallman,*** *Editors*

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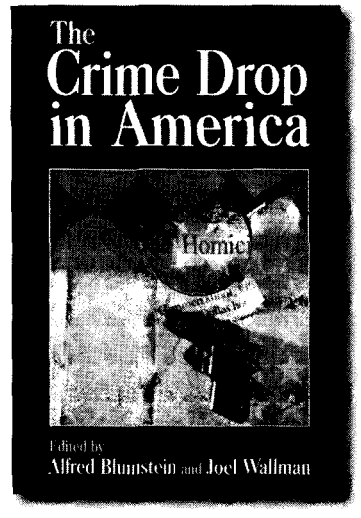

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■ CITY DESK ■

Dis-Orientation

RICHARD BROOKHISER

"We're Asian girl."

Two college guys, both averagely average, both belonging to the plurality race of the state of California, passed me on the sidewalk, one sneering incorrectly to the other. Following their eye-beams, I saw, walking away from us, two young women. Heads of spiked hair, like dandelions about to seed, electric blue and red. Some outré get-up, based on unmatching tie-dyed T-shirts (tell us, Old Ones, about Sonny and Cher). Gay girls, or at least gay until graduation, arms around each other's waists (the dilemma of all same-sex promenaders—where exactly do I put these things?). And, Beer-Boy was right: Both were Asian.

He showed resentment of orientation, certainly: The two young ladies, by going out together, contracted the field of courtship. But, although he could never prove this to a jury of his betters, he did not, I think, show racial animosity. Yes, he spoke a cartoonish Asio-Saxon: the cubist speech rhythm, all spondees; the dropped plural. But he spoke with the pique of rejected love. He wanted them all the more because they were what we once used to call Oriental.

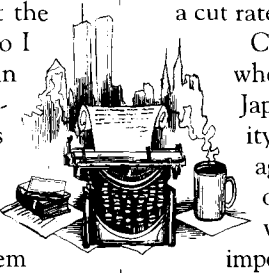
Asians are one of the flavors of the decade. Because colleges base non-black admissions on test scores, Asian-American kids proliferate at elite schools. In New York, the prize sub-flavor is Japanese. The Garment District may be all Korean now, and Little Italy, apart from a strip of restaurants maintained for tourists, all Chinese. But Koreans and Chinese are not cool. Look at the PRC: One billion people, and all they can make are sneakers and hecatombs. The Japanese, and the Japanese alone, have style. Centuries of Zen and sublimation have paid off: The Japanese in New York have an edge; they look sharp; they are a step ahead of our desires, and they are objects of desire.

■

The reason for New York's attraction to the Japanese is obvious: If it's new, we want some.

■

One place my wife always takes me to shop is an East Village consignment store. It is a storefront the size of a walk-in closet; half the wares hang from pipes 15 feet off the ground, because there isn't room on the double-decker clothes racks below. This is where I got the reversible sport coat; also the thigh-length dinner jacket with holes in the front. (When people ask me about the holes, I tell them gravely that the designer ran out of material, so I got it at a discount). The man who collects and sells these oddities is Japanese. He is queer as a 300-yen note, and he has an eye like a crystal.



You see young Japanese all over downtown. Most of them have dyed hair: brown, blonde, party colors. Many of them are also evidently not Japanese-Americans, but temporary emigrés: students, or artists of one sort or another making a trans-Pacific stopover. The proof of their foreign birth is the number of small shops in boho neighborhoods selling peculiar Japanese delicacies, which would not appeal to the palates of kids raised in California.

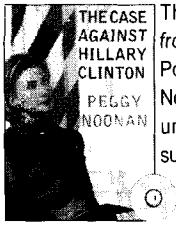
Japan was the first modernist nation, discovering key aesthetic aspects of the 20th century—lean surfaces, reticence, the fascist attitude towards duty and death—ages ahead of Europe. When the children of Japan come to New York now, they soak up marketing, vulgarity, and fashion with the same passionate devotion.

Young Americans return the interest. Dating is a great attraction, as the two frustrated swains I overheard indicate (new flesh tones are condiments in the sexual cafeteria). Japanese food is hugely and, to my mind, undeservedly, popular. There is a sushi place in my neighborhood, in the basement of a brick townhouse built in the 1840s. The silverfish must be the size of salmon, but the lines, even on rainy nights, stretch down the block. People who read comic books and watch cartoons swear by Japanimation.

The reason for New York's attraction to the Japanese is obvious: If it's new, we want some. Our curiosity is untainted by self-interest. Ten years ago we thought Japan would rule the world. Now that Japan, Inc., is a wreck, we still want to bring on Godzilla. What do young Japanese see in New York? An old friend of mine, who made the journey here ahead of the curve, explained her attraction as a powerful need for release. Japanese culture is as restrictive as a Taliban harem. Her intricate escape route took her through evangelical Protestantism, then moving to the United States, then psychoanalysis. Her juniors are getting a breath of fresh air at a cut rate.

Could they reshape Japan when they return? A recent Japanese experiment in ethnicity offers a clue. Some years ago, alarmed by the numbers of Arab and Filipino grunt workers the country was importing, Japan decided to try another source: Brazilians who were descended from Japanese laborers on the rubber plantations decades earlier. They would be cheap, and there would be no ethnic tensions. But in the event, the Japanese-Brazilians were too like Brazilians, brash and exuberant. The test failed.

Japan will probably close ranks against its repatriated New Yorkers. The main effect might be literary. Even now, some Japanese Hemingway is storing up material for his account of his East Village Paris. **NR**



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WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

California, B.A.

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 19

THE California college-grant operation has gone almost unnoticed. It is supremely interesting and may prove a model for orderly welfarism.

The arrangement, scheduled to start next year, calls for granting a state subvention of $9,700 to all low-income and many middle-income graduates of California high schools who score B or better at school and go on to a non-state college.

If we assume that 40 percent of the high schoolers got B's or better in 1990–2000, what will be the likely grade average in 2000–2010? Optimists will put it this way: The added inducement of $38,800 towards tuition (four years at $9,700) will spur intellectual application among children, and that is hardly to be discouraged or criticized. The difficulty here is that the giving out of grades is in part a subjective exercise. It is the evaluation of a student's work by a teacher. When grading time comes, that teacher is going to ask himself (herself): Am I dooming this kid's future by failing to give him a B? Will I then be responsible for whatever failures in his life derive from having less than a college education, since he could never afford one if he needed to pay his own way?

This invites reflection on the whole meritocratic idea. Is there a judge out there (in California, the answer is there is a judge out there who will say anything) who will come along and say that to give state money to Alice and deny it to Joan merely because Alice scored better at school is to exercise discrimination? It may be all right for the teacher to decide on the relative accomplishments of Alice and Joan, but it is not okay for her ruling in the matter to involve public money. This line of argument may seem preposterous, but what is preposterous can become law. A couple of judges have told Texas students they can't pray at a school event.

If California moves in the direction of giving every student a B, or if it moves in the direction of enlarging (further) the subsidy to include C and D students, then what we have got is free college education for everybody.

And it is time to ask: What is so bad about that? What is bad about it is that we have another entitlement, and a firm commandment in public policy ought to be: No more entitlements.

But here are the virtues of the idea:

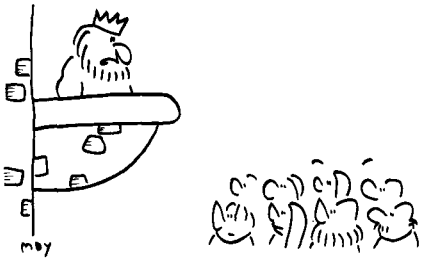
1) It is an individual state, acting on its own; unrelated to Washington, D.C. In this space, over the years, we have stressed the unintelligibility of the "round-trip dollar," namely the dollar that travels from Rhode Island to Washington and then back to Rhode Island from Washington, having spent there an expensive night out on the town.

2) California is swimming in a huge fiscal surplus at this moment and feels the impulse to spread its welfarist wings. The theater of operations is education. A huge question, in California, is the dismal performance of many public schools. There are schools there which, if they give out B grades, are doing so as an act of misguided charity, or else because they stumbled onto a student who has contrived to learn athwart the obstacles of bad teachers. Designed to accost this most fundamental problem is Proposition 38, a voucher-oriented measure that would help those families stranded in bad schools but unable, for lack of far less than $9,700, to get what students most need: a productive educational launch in life.

The Search for Pure Thought

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 22

ARE you up on the Declaration of Human Rights and the arguments that accompanied its formulation? There was old Heneage Finch, making



"Well, yes, but there's an element of risk in all wars."

the case for the right to own guns, in the event they should be needed to protect, not against urban terrorists, but against the Crown, in 1689. If you think that going back that far, when you're trying to decide the constitutionality of gun-control laws, is pretty idle stuff, at least you'd agree to jump forward 100 years. And to ask, what did James Madison have in mind when he sponsored the Second Amendment, with its 27 fractious words, on which scholars and judges and legislators and editorialists and Charlton Heston chew away, year after year?

Gary Rosen, writing for *Commentary* magazine (September issue) lines up the arguments for and against gun control and the data that support them. But he suggests that moderate impositions on gun-owning are, really, defensible even under an individual-rights interpretation of the Amendment—on the grounds that supervisory laws designed to serve a general purpose do not necessarily vitiate specified rights (zoning and construction-permit laws don't seriously undermine the right to private property).

But William Glaberson, in a nifty roundup for the *New York Times* (September 21), reminds us how acute are the ongoing academic controversies. Consider James Madison. People want desperately to unearth what exactly he had in mind in sponsoring the language of the amendment and averring "the right of the people to keep and bear arms." Focus on this little seedling of academic and judicial controversy:

1. An essayist called Tench Coxe writes a letter to Madison complimenting him on the then-recent adoption of the Bill of Rights.

2. Madison writes back and says, in effect, thanks a lot.

3. Now Mr. Coxe was an ardent believer in the individual-rights interpretation of the Second Amendment. So, say some scholars,

4. Doesn't the whole thing suggest that Madison was also?

No, it does not, say the gun controllers. Madison intended nothing more than to thank Tench for writing in and approving of the Bill of Rights. Madison did not think to take the opportunity to say where his version of the Second Amendment and that of Tench Coxe differed.

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What most recently triggered the debate was a decision by Judge Sam R. Cummings, a federal district-court judge who last year dismissed a gun-possession charge against a Texan doctor, on the grounds that the law under which he was being pursued was unconstitutional. The judge wrote, "A historical examination of the right to bear arms, from English antecedents to the drafting of the Second Amendment, bears proof that the right to bear arms has consistently been, and should still be, construed as an individual right."

That was the general view of the question in the 1990s, but it is being vigorously challenged by scholars on the other side.

Now here is a question that begs the others, but is none the less arresting.

There is every reason to care deeply and enduringly whether, let us say, Christ really did multiply the loaves and the fishes. If He didn't, and if the skeptical inquiry led to reinterpreting the happenings of Easter Sunday, then life and the understanding of life would be very different.

But how does such reverential attention get attached to what James Madison thought those 27 words meant, over against what we understand them to mean?

The central idea of the Bill of Rights is that Congress may not do certain things, having to do with religion, free speech, the right to assemble, the right to protest—and the right to keep and bear arms. Myriad challenges to the elucidation of these rights have been made in the two centuries since the Bill of Rights came into being. We accept it as a working arrangement that the courts will continue to parse the meaning of the Founders. But this becomes something of a historical game. And it is a game that invites ideological opportunism. It is preposterous to believe that the men who consecrated the republic would have objected to common prayer in public high schools—but that's what it has come down to, as the exegetes hack away, egged on by politically active lobbies.

Suppose that, the day after tomorrow, someone were to discover a letter from James Madison that had sat all these years in an attic.

It is addressed to Tench Coxe. It reads, "Dear Mr. Coxe: I neglected to add, in my letter to you last week, that I sympathize heartily with your own views about the right to keep arms, which is why I endorsed the language of the Second Amendment."

Where would the anti-gun people go then?

They'd find a way. This is the resourceful age that came up with *Roe* v. *Wade* and *Everson* and *McCollum*. They'd find a way to transcend Madison and that old firebrand, Tench Coxe.

What Are the French Saying?

NEW YORK, SEPTEMBER 26

THERE are those who give off just a little whiff of derision at the behavior of the French in the national plebiscite on Sunday. Gallic lordliness on all matters great and small isn't really sustained by the historical record. They began it 200 years ago with a bloody revolution, followed by the dictatorship of Napoleon, the surrender to Bismarck, the bloodletting of the First World War, and the diplomatic and military ineptitude that brought on Nazi occupation. The republic was pretty down and out when President de Gaulle jacked up its glory with the Fifth Republic. And a centerpiece of it, a seven-year term for the president of France, has now been revised at the polls. What smarted was not the rejection of the seven-year term in favor of five years, but the utter indifference of the French voting public to a civic exercise.

The reform was backed by the two principal political organs, President Chirac's Gaullist party and Prime Minister Jospin's Socialist party. These antipodean political entities had engaged in cohabitation (the French word for it) for three years. In 1997 President Chirac committed one of those great political blunders, absolutely counting on one result, and begetting a different one. (Milosevic has just finished doing the same thing: calling an election in full confidence that he would win it, and then losing.) Rather than ratify the call of Chirac that the voters reaffirm him and his policies, the socialists swept in and have been sharing the bed all this time.

At least what we can do about such anomalies in government—the thinking went—is reduce the elongated presidential term, which was created in the image of Charles de Gaulle, who was unique. A French legislative election can take place whenever the two houses vote for it or when the president decrees. The result of this is that even with a set five-year term, there is no guarantee that, in the future, government will be any less incestuous than it is today. But the French would have better protection against such afflictions as 14 endless years of President Mitterrand, marked by scandal and corruption and a hauteur that only de Gaulle could realistically get away with.

But what happened, of course, was that 70 percent of the French voters didn't bother to express themselves on the issue. Those that did leaned overwhelmingly in favor of the reduced term, by a 3–1 majority. The impression left isn't that the republic engaged in a sophisticated act of reform; rather, that the French voting public is overwhelmingly unconcerned with political arrangements. This reflects in part, disillusion with Chirac's alleged involvement in a payoff scandal and the derivative involvement of Jospin in failing to publicize it.

Americans are naturally reluctant to correlate the size of the vote with the health of the republic, but eyes are of course turned on the structural leverage of the political plebiscite. Coming up immediately in Denmark is the vote on whether to ratify the substitution of the euro for the Danish kroner. What weighs in the balance is the larger question of political centralization. Everybody who is anybody in Denmark wants full-bodied association with the European federation. But there are a lot of Danes who are not members of the establishment, and they don't think it's a very good idea to let Brussels, manipulated mostly by Berlin, decide future political questions.

Meanwhile, in Great Britain, Tony Blair has said he would live up to the promise of submitting full membership in the EU to the public at large. That means that the voters might find themselves at one and the same time voting for another term for Tony Blair and for the end of parliamentary sovereignty. The temptation would be there to exercise a preference for continued British independence, even if it means that they have to do without dear Tony.

The French *always* find interesting ways to say whatever it is they are trying to say, and this time is no exception.

—UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

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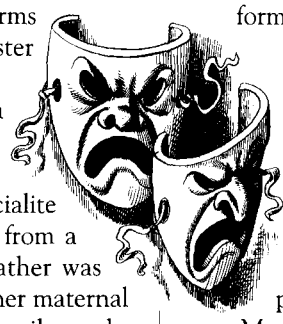
■ THE MISANTHROPE'S CORNER ■

FLORENCE KING

If you're sick of politics too, here's an "October surprise." For sheer escapism nothing beats a classic British murder case, so let's time-travel to Glasgow in 1857 for a front-row seat at *Regina* v. *Madeleine Smith*.

She was 21 when she was tried for the arsenic murder of her lover, Emile L'Angelier. He was 34, a tousle-haired, liquid-eyed French adventurer who had taken part in the Revolution of 1848, making him in modern terms an ex–Vietnam War protester and hippie has-been.



That and his job as a clerk in a Glasgow factory office made him an unacceptable suitor for a rich socialite like Madeleine. She came from a family of architects; her father was renowned in the field and her maternal grandfather was David Hamilton, designer of the Royal Exchange.

She had been prepared for the life of an upper-crust society hostess at a select English finishing school, where she acquired all the fashionably useless accomplishments. Her academic learning was sparse, but she did pick up one valuable fact: Arsenic, all the girls said, did wonders for the complexion when used as an astringent, producing that deathly pallor so prized by Victorian ladies.

After graduation, she returned home and marked time, waiting to marry. Her father already had a husband picked out for her, a friend of his named William Minnoch. Little is known about him, but the name alone inspired one commentator on the case to conjure him up as "ginger whiskers and tedium." I conjure up Mr. Minnoch as that sterling impediment of indigestible rectitude known as "good husband material." It's possible that the thought of spending the rest of her life with him drove Madeleine around the bend and into L'Angelier's arms. Considering the deconstructive effect of unflagging male virtue on female nerves, Mr. Minnoch emerges as an accessory before the fact.

Under normal Victorian conditions it would have been impossible for Emile even to meet Madeleine, but he was a social climber and a tireless practitioner of what we call "networking." By making himself agreeable, doing little favors, and stroking everyone who crossed his path, he finally met somebody who knew somebody who knew a friend of Madeleine's sister. A carefully calibrated meeting took place on the street when the Smith girls were out walking, and he was formally introduced to her.

Emile came late at night and stood at the window of Madeleine's street-level room, talking with her while she served hot cocoa on the sill. She was able to bring him into the house a couple of times thanks to her mutual-aid pact with one of the maids—Madeleine looked the other way when the maid's boyfriend slipped in—but nothing happened, so to speak, because her sister shared her room.

The act that the High Court of Justiciary would call "connexion" took place when Emile followed her to the Smiths' summer home in Rowallen and they had at it in the garden, the orchard, the riverbank, everywhere but in the house. This daughter of architecture liked her sex alfresco.

She also liked to write letters. All Victorians did, but there is nothing Victorian about Madeleine's. They were more like today's phone sex. "I am much excited tonight," she wrote. "It is a pleasure, and no one can deny that. It is but human nature." She even described finding blood on herself.

Her splendor in the grass was short-lived. Like many a woman before and since, she soon discovered an unpleasant truth about men: As soon as they've had you, they try to boss you around.

Emile started criticizing everything about her: clothes, friends, habits, her letters, even her sexual submission. He turned into a prude, condemning her for yielding to him and making her promise not to do it again. His object was a rich wife, or, in lieu of that, money and improved status; his method was to break her down until she was putty in his hands. But he went too far when he threatened to show her letters to her father. Deciding to fight back, Madeleine went to the chemist's.

After a cocoa-on-the-windowsill date, Emile became ill. Two more sessions at Madeleine's bar did the trick: He was found dead with 82 grains of arsenic in his stomach (4 to 6 is enough). The police searched his room and found stacks of Madeleine's letters, all "crossed" in the fashion of the time: After finishing a page, she turned it sideways and wrote across her own words. One crime writer has suggested that reading them drove Emile to suicide.

Madeleine's icy poise in the dock, even while her letters were read aloud, was grudgingly admired. Her raven-haired beauty and pale complexion didn't hurt either. The Crown had to show that Emile saw her the night before his death, but she was saved by a smudged postmark and an all-male jury, who brought the dour Scottish verdict of "Not Proven," the Presbyterian way of saying "We know you did it, but . . . "

She was free, and only 21. What happened to her? A recent book, *Murder in Victorian Scotland* by Douglas MacGowan, tells us she moved to London, married the designer George Wardle, and lived in raffish Bloomsbury, where she charmed George Bernard Shaw and, according to Sacheverell Sitwell, posed for Rosetti. She also invented the place mat, inspired perhaps by her windowsill snacks. She got on with the Socialist set but we can bet she was contemptuous of them: They were theory, she was action.

In 1910 she emigrated to America where her son, Thomas Wardle, had settled. Then 75, she married 49-year-old William A. Sheehy, who died in 1926. Madeleine died two years later and is buried in Mount Hope Cemetery in Hastings-on-Hudson, N.Y., under the name Lena Wardle Sheehy. She was 92. The good die young, except Mr. Minnoch, who became president of the Glasgow Chamber of Commerce.

Madeleine Smith, R.I.P. A cad took the fuzz off her peach and she took the lining off his stomach. Some women just don't need the vote. **NR**

Miss King can be reached at P. O. Box 7113, Fredericksburg, Va. 22404.

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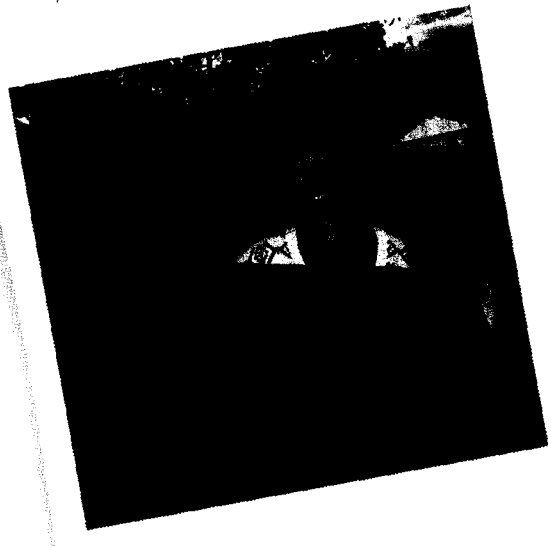
Judy Shields
Lancaster, PA



You're One In A Million.

Since we created the Visa® Lifetime Soil Release Guarantee in 1993, we have averaged only one tablecloth replacement per million sold! We are proud to offer a product that continues to perform use after use after use.

Look for the Visa® starburst logo on the package to be sure you're purchasing a real Visa® brand table linen. You can find Visa® brand table linens at the following stores:

LIFETIME SOIL-RELEASE GUARANTEE • VISA BY MILLIKEN

• Bed Bath & Beyond • Belk's • Bloomingdale's • Bradlee's • Dayton Hudson • Dillard's • Foley's • Fortunoff • Hecht's • • JC Penney • Kaufmann's • Kohl's • Linens 'n Things • Luxury Linens • Macy's • Marshall Field's • Stein Mart • Target • Wal-Mart •

For more information, visit www.visatablelinen.com

MILLIKEN

* The Lifetime Soil Release Guarantee covers all normal food stains. The Guarantee excludes ink, pigments and dyes, cigarette ash and candle wax.

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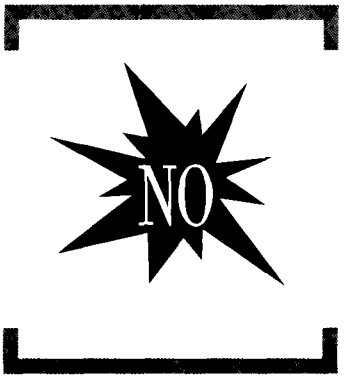
KIDS & TOBACCO



Kids should not smoke. Nor should they have access to tobacco products. We believe there is broad agreement on this important issue.

At Philip Morris USA, we are committed to dealing responsibly with the complex problem of underage smoking. There is no single, easy answer to this issue. Many experts suggest the best way to address underage smoking is through broad-based, integrated approaches that include communications, education, community involvement and access prevention.

As part of our commitment to play a role in reducing underage smoking, we have created a Youth Smoking Prevention Department whose sole purpose is to develop and support programs to help reduce the incidence of youth smoking. We've dedicated significant resources—over $100 million last year—toward initiatives based on the key components listed above. We are spending another $100 million against these initiatives in 2000.

Our effort includes support for school-based programs, one of which has been recognized for prevention excellence by the National Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other national organizations. We're also running national advertising campaigns: one that encourages kids not to smoke, and one that urges parents to talk to their kids about not smoking.

To help prevent minors' access to tobacco products, we support and help fund the Coalition for Responsible Tobacco Retailing's nationwide "We Card" retailer education and training program. This effort has helped train over 500,000 retail store employees to reject attempted purchases by minors.

Working to help prevent youth smoking is important and it's the right thing to do for our company and for our employees. It's also the right thing to do on behalf of our shareholders and our adult customers. Everyone has a stake in solving the problem of underage smoking. At Philip Morris USA, we are working to help find answers.

For more information about our youth smoking prevention efforts, visit our Web site at www.philipmorrisusa.com. If you don't have Internet access, please call 1-877-PMUSAWEB.

TOBACCO TODAY
one in a series

Philip Morris USA

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